Summer Books Issue

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LIBERALS AND LIBERATION

Gary Hart on Fareed Zakaria

Joshua Micah Marshall on Paul Berman

Sidney Blumenthal on Clinton and Kosovo

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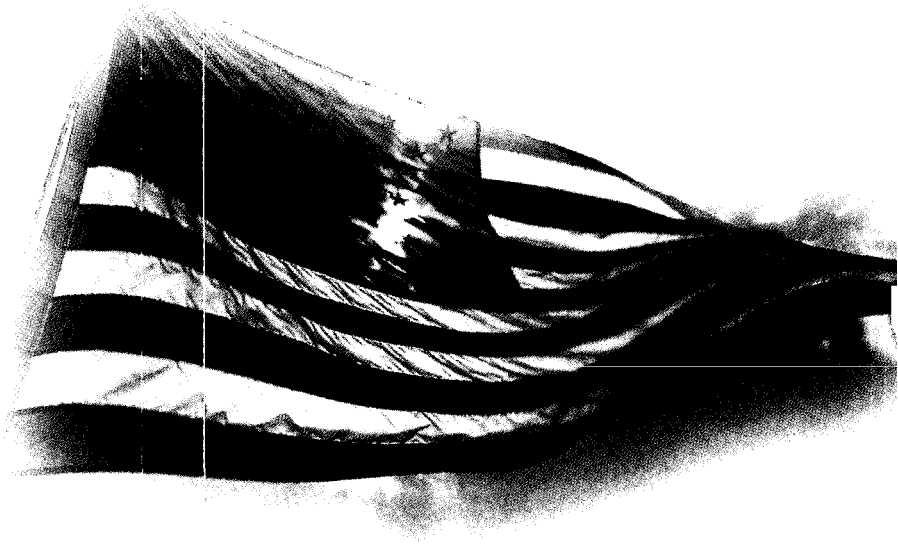

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Letters

Creative Class Act

Yes, the world advances through the innovations of its creative community, those who make dreams tangible, who invent, excite, and provoke ("The New American Dream," by Richard Florida, March). But when creativity is crushed, wasted, or detoured, advancement can give way to sluggishness, as talent is wasted on the numbness of reality TV and overmedication.

American creativity needs to reemerge and Richard Florida's expertise and interpretations offer value and insight. Hopefully his article will get more people motivated. Bravo—write more.

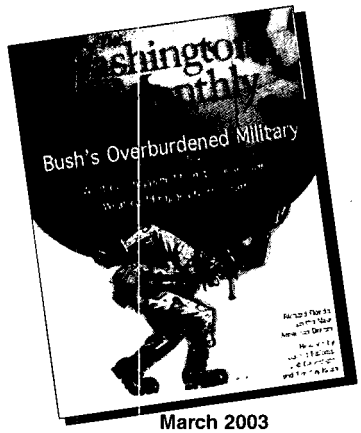
MADELINE BEHRENDT
via email

Richard Florida mentioned new creative talent in America and listed *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*. I suppose he may have been implying that the creative mind behind this project is American, but she is not. Nia Vardalos is from Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. The movie was also filmed in Toronto, Ontario. I'm sure Vardalos is proud of being a Canadian and wouldn't appreciate being recognized as a creative mind from the United States.

SARAH KETT
via email

Just Cause

Here in El Paso, Texas, we too are wondering what happened to President Bush's pledge to expand national service ("What Ever Happened to National Service?" by Richard Just, March). Our AmeriCorps program had a January 2003 start date—we have yet to enroll members. We were caught in the middle of the freeze on AmeriCorps member enrollment and still haven't been told if indeed we will be able to enroll members and begin providing services to address



March 2003

the needs of hundreds of youth in our community.

SANDRA BRAHAM
El Paso, Texas

I am proud to be able to address the question Richard Just poses. National service—or at least participation in service nationally—is alive and well with National Student Partnerships (NSP), where university student volunteers run drop-in centers in nine cities around the country, helping disadvantaged residents gain access to critical employment, social, and human services within their community. Since 1998, the organization has grown from the founders' ambitious idea—recruiting Yale University students to help residents of the impoverished New Haven community—into a national movement of nine fully functioning, all-student-volunteer run local offices, where volunteers have helped hundreds of clients create résumés, perform employment searches, identify temporary and permanent housing situations, and apply for health or daycare.

NSP will celebrate its five-year anniversary next fall by expanding to five new sites within the year. None of this would be possible without the energy, leadership, and dedication of our student volunteers, who certainly reveal the true "spirit" of national service, and contribute to the creation of our nation's culture of service—with or without the legislative commitment from Washington.

ROBERT SCOTT BANASZAK
Communications Director
National Student Partnerships
Washington, D.C.

Arms Wrestling

Dave Marash's article ("Saddam's Serb Supplier," March) does a good job uncovering the arms-trade connection between Serbia and Saddam Hussein.

As for the Bush administration's lack of interest in the Balkans, this phenomenon can be explained by the fact that the special interests who influence the White House have no stake in the Balkans, as opposed to the forces that dominated the Clinton administration's agenda. Unfortunately, the common interest is on no one's agenda.

NICK GATSOULIS
New York, N.Y.

After reading the article by Dave Marash, I can only feel anger and dismay at the E.U. for pushing Croatia into the SAA Stability and Association Agreement, which obliges Croatia to open its borders and make all kinds of association agreements with these former Yugoslavian republics, with which Croatia never culturally had any connections.

Croatia has for more than 1,000 years belonged to the Western, Central European, and Mediterranean culture and religion, while being part of Yugoslavia for only some 70 years—where it was subjugated by the Serbs. One can read in many important international reports about the lawlessness and criminality in the Balkan states, but Croatia is never included. Croatia simply does not belong in the Balkans—never did. When will the rest of the world understand this?

HILDA M. FOLEY
National Federation of Croatian Americans
Santa Ana, Calif.

Mother Mirth

Thank you for the warm memories you brought back with Elizabeth Austin's article about Jean Kerr ("Giving Mirth," March).

I read Kerr first in high school, reread her as a young married, rereread her as a young mother and fledgling suburbanite. While my one

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child couldn't compare with her brood, my son's escapades made up for in quality what hers accomplished in quantity.

My favorite bit of Kerr is the story of the dinner party where she found herself in a dress made of the same fabric as her hostess' drapes and the dog ate her earring.

I am digging into my bookcases later to uncover my *very* worn copies of *Please Don't Eat The Daisies*, *The Snake Has All The Lines*, and *Penny Candy*. That should make for a very pleasant evening.

INGER GIRE
via email

I loved the sentiments expressed in this article. Jean Kerr's portrayal of motherhood reminds me of my mother, who despite her occasional grumblings and gripings, claims she has no regrets becoming a full-time homemaker. I'm grateful for that.

I admire my mother, for her ability to laugh and to take pleasure in what she does, and for telling me that motherhood isn't all that bad—it has its moments.

PETRA GIMBAD
via email

Task Master

Regarding "G.I. Woe" by Nicholas Confessore (March): The information about the Unit Manning Task Force is incorrect. It is true that the old head of the task force deployed to meet an operational requirement. He was replaced by one of the Army's experts on system engineering, reorganization and realignment. We are definitely not "dead." (We've actually expanded the task force and are still working on this effort.)

LTC STAN HEATH
G-1/PERSCOM Public Affairs Officer
via email

Liberals Take Leave

I enjoyed Timothy Noah's review of Eric Alterman's *What Liberal Media* ("Bias Schmias," March). As an avid long-time listener to NPR, I have seen it become much more moderate than it used to be.

On "Talk of the Nation," the host will have someone from the American Enterprise Institute or Heritage Foundation for one side, but the other side (for balance) may be a liberal or even moderate. Congress and conservatives have bashed NPR to the point where they truly bend over backward to be "balanced." This is a classic example of "working the ref."

I also read the editorials and op-eds in *The New York Times'* online edition every day. The editorials are usually liberal, but the op-eds are all over the place. It, too, is more moderate than before.

It is becoming very difficult to find a wide array of liberal opinion unless you actively search for it.

MARV TOLER
via email

Hard-Core Gore

I found Jeff Greenfield's article on the contested 1876 election and recount battle ("Hayes's Ride," March) very informative. I must disagree however, with the portrayal of Al Gore in a bad light. The article's subtitle—"In 1876, A Democratic candidate won the presidency, but through lack of nerve lost the recount. Sound familiar?"—is a simplistic and, I feel, inaccurate reading of the events surrounding the 2000 election.

At the time and in several books since, Gore was accused of trying to steal the election from Bush. Though I also disagree with this interpretation, it does imply that Gore worked to swing the recount his way. His nationwide address to accept a statewide recount in Florida contrasts sharply with the Republican tactics of delaying and stopping vote recounts. He took every "legal" recourse at his disposal. He chose the course of trusting in our democratic systems instead of manipulating them. For this you portray him as lacking nerve?

I think a little less focus on Gore's "lack of nerve" and a lot more focus on the present occupier of the White House and his tactics would do this country a world of good.

JAMES PHILLIPS
Pine Bluff, Ark.

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Tilting at Windmills

By Charles Peters

Ashcroft's Approval Rating • The Five-Star Loophole • Osama's Miniskirted Niece
You Say Slovakia, I Say Slovenia • Useful Idiots and Stupid White Men • Jesus as a Lefty

Osama bin Laden's niece, Waffa, is launching a pop singing career in London. According to London's *Sunday Telegraph*, she's become "a fixture on the London club scene after moving to the [city] six months ago" and "drinks alcohol, smokes cigarettes, and wears mini-skirts and designer clothes by Versace." This doesn't seem likely to enhance her uncle's affection for the West.

With everyone distracted for months by the Iraq war and its build up, I fear Wall Street and the business community may have been falling back into their bad habits. Remember how investment banking companies were supposed to stop pressuring their analysts to give favorable ratings to their clients' stocks? Well, here's what's happening: The stock analysts employed by the top investment banking firms, writes *The Wall Street Journal*'s Randall Smith, "still consistently give higher ratings to stocks of their own banking clients." For example, at Goldman Sachs, 79 percent of the stocks with "outperform" ratings were those of clients.

As HealthSouth's stock was plunging last year, its most enthusiastic backer was UBS Warburg analyst Howard Capek, who refused to lower his rating below "buy." The investment banker for HealthSouth is—guess who?—UBS Warburg, of course.

As for the rights of shareholders, here's how, according to the *Times*' Floyd Norris, Verizon answered a shareholder who wanted the company to have competing candidates in corporate elections:

"If there were competing candidates, it would be difficult to predict which individuals would be elected."

In other words, are you crazy?! How could we be sure of winning and keeping control?! So much for the cause of corporate democracy.

Each time I read of innocent Iraqis being shot at checkpoints because they hadn't heeded orders to halt—one Marine said, "Everyone should understand 'stop'"—I recalled a story I had read shortly before the war started. The military, it said, was continuing to enforce its policy of discharging known gays. Among those recently discharged, the article noted, were five fluent Arabic speakers.

One of the most disturbing aspects of the administration's march to war was the dubious intelligence used to justify it. The most conspicuous examples were the forged Niger documents cited by Bush to justify his assertion that Iraq had tried to buy uranium from Africa and the aluminum tubes he kept insisting were being used for nuclear programs, even though the U.N. inspectors said there was no evidence the tubes were being used for anything but missile production. Earlier, the administration had tried desperately to inflate the thinnest evidence into a case that Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden were in cahoots. Remember that al Qaeda operative who was supposed to have met an Iraqi diplomat in Prague? And don't forget the other al Qaeda agent who was supposed to have been treated in a Baghdad hospital.

This kind of stretching reached the outer limits of absurdity when the Bush gang compiled a list of nations involved in the "coalition of the willing." Among the coalition's members with no troops and scarcely a dime to spare for a military adventure are Costa Rica, Palau, Iceland, the Marshall Islands, and Micronesia. The administration's list also included the Solomon Islands and Slovenia, even though neither had agreed. Slovenia apparently got on the list because the State Department confused it with Slovakia, which had agreed to join the coalition. After all, the first four letters of each are the same. Besides, one suspects some of the State Department officials compiling the list found the exercise so embarrassing they got a tad careless putting it together.

As we were going to war in Iraq over the dedicated opposition of French diplomats and Francophobia was rearing its head across America, I happened to have lunch at Les Halles, a French restaurant in downtown Washington. As I was being served, I noticed that all the waiters were wearing the identical tie—one emblazoned not only with an American flag, but also a screaming eagle, the symbol of the 101st Airborne.

Concerned that its readers might not be up to snuff on matters of military rank and organization, *The Washington Post* recently ran a chart designed to make everything clear. What it showed, however, was that it definitely wasn't clear to the *Post*. Two important ranks, major and brigadier general, were completely omitted, as was a very sizable

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organizational unit—the regiment.

"Money Problems Made Airlines Safer," was the headline over a recent article by Matthew Wald in *The New York Times*. The reason is that "airlines with money problems have retired some planes, leaving active fleets of 'newer, state-of-the-art' airplanes," according to Nicholas A. Sabatini, the FAA's associate administrator for regulation and certification. Another factor is that fewer planes to fly means less need for pilots, which, because of seniority, means, "what you have on the flight deck is a very highly experienced combination of crew members." I did not find this news totally reassuring. The implication seems to be that the more prosperous the airline, the more likely we are to be flying decrepit planes crewed from the bottom of the barrel.

"For a Supreme Court Graybeard, States' Rights Can Do No Wrong," was another recent *Times* headline, this over an article by Linda Greenhouse describing Chief Justice William Rehnquist's more than 20 years of dedication to the principle of judicial deference to the authority of the states. The question I wish Greenhouse had explored was just what happened to that principle in the case of *Bush v. Gore*, in which the Rehnquist court reversed a long judicial tradition of deference to the states on election issues, handing Bush a victory in Florida without the recount that might have changed the result and that had, in fact, been ordered by the state's highest court.

John Ashcroft take note: In a recent survey designed to determine the percentage of government employees who hold the leadership of their agency in high regard, the figure for the Justice Department was 38.7 percent.

Although Matthew Wald argues that airline poverty may be improving safety, the opposite may be true according to *The Wall Street Journal*'s Andy Pasztor, who sees a danger that cutbacks will adversely affect maintenance. The airlines have dropped or targeted for elimination more than 7,000 maintenance employees. The head of the pilots' union of United Airlines complains about "an alarming trend" of deferring maintenance or overlooking potential safety problems, writes Pasztor, who concludes "what's clear is that the nation's largest airlines are rushing to slash maintenance costs."

With everyone distracted by the Iraq war and its build up, Wall Street and the business community have been falling back into their bad habits.

A major airline trend is to "outsource" maintenance, with the airlines contracting with another company to take care of its planes —which I nervously recall is just what ValueJet did with the plane that went down in the Everglades several years ago. The crash of a U.S. Airways turboprop as it took off from Charlotte, N.C., last fall is suspected of being due to an inexperienced mechanic who was working not for U.S. Airways, but for a contractor.

Only in New York Department: In a recent article attacking breast feeding, *The New York Observer*'s Leora Tanenbaum cited as one of the "sacrifices" required by the practice is that women have to wear "loose-fitting, unfashionable nursing shirts."

The loophole you can drive a truck through in the new House ethics rule is the one that permits all-expense-paid trips by congressmen to charity fundraising events. "Under the new rule," write *The Washington Post*'s Jim VandeHei and Juliet Eilperin, "a corporation could anonymously underwrite a charity event on the greens of, say, Pebble Beach ... and provide accommodations at a five-star resort. The corporation then could send its top executives and lobbyists to the event for a weekend of schmoozing with lawmakers."

Another ethics tidbit: The boxes at the MCI Center where the Washington Wizards and Capitals play offer the most luxurious accommodations. The next-best seats sell for $90 each, yet the House Ethics Committee permits the MCI Center to declare that the box seat is worth less than $50 when it is occupied by a congressman.

A recent survey of Pennsylvanians, reported in the February issue of *Governing* magazine, shows that "the majority favored higher prescription drug subsidies for the elderly, more money for public education, and better funding for higher education." Sounds like they're a bunch of liberals, doesn't it? But wait a minute. "They also, however, opposed any increase in the state sales tax or income tax." When it comes to paying the bill, they suddenly become very conservative.

The average civil servant in the Washington area now makes $72,670 a year. When you consider that federal employees also have health, retirement, vacation, and sick-leave benefits more generous than is usual in the private sector, it is clear that reforming federal pay does not require raises for everyone, but raises targeted to performance and to hard-to-fill positions.

By the way, there has been a major breakthrough on the pay-for-performance front. Washington-area congressmen usually move in lockstep with the civil service unions, but Rep. Tom Davis, a

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Republican from suburban Virginia, is said by *The Washington Post*'s Stephen Barr to favor a system that would "remove longevity as a key factor in decisions on pay" and be based on performance ratings. And what's more, low-performing employees could be fired. This is definitely not going to be an easy sell to the unions, but it is heartening that Davis doesn't seem to feel he is committing political suicide by proposing it.

MANY PEOPLE BUY CELL PHONES for the sense of security they provide. Nearly 30 percent of 911 calls are made with cell phones, according to Jim Goerke of the National Emergency Number Association. But what actually happens when the calls are made?

"When the windows shattered in the little white house in Chillum and flames lapped upward to the children's bedrooms, a neighbor grabbed her cell phone and dialed 911," writes *The Washington Post*'s Petula Dvorac. "Her call flew through the skies of Prince George's County—only to land at the wrong fire department." Chillum is in Maryland, but the call had been picked up by a tower in the District of Columbia, which sent it on to a District firehouse. The blaze killed a woman and two of her children.

Sometimes cell phones just don't connect, and often a call is picked up by the wrong cell-phone tower. The result is that 15 percent of 911 calls made by cell phones don't get through, according to a test that Dvorac writes was conducted by *Consumer Reports*. Even when the caller gets to the right place, "most 911 call takers do not have access to automatic addresses or call-back numbers, as they do with calls from traditional phones."

The most maddening story is of an 18-year-old woman who called 911 to report that she was being kidnapped and sexually assaulted. The 911 operator simply could not tell where she was. She was not found until her assailant had killed her.

By 2005 there's supposed to be a system in place that will use Global Positioning System technology to pinpoint a phone's location. Until then, the bad news is that you can't count on your cell phone to do what you thought it would.

ACCORDING TO A PEW RESEARCH Center poll, 46.4 percent of Fox News viewers see themselves as "conservative" or "very conservative" and only 17.7 percent as "liberal" or "very liberal." Considering that we're talking about Fox, that's not exactly astounding. But the figures for CNN and MSNBC aren't that different—39.7 versus 16.1 and 40.4 versus 15.8, respectively. Even the figures for ABC, NBC, and CBS are similar.

Katrina Leung, a.k.a. "Parlor Maid," allegedly spied on us for China while the FBI was paying her $1.7 million to spy on China. Why wasn't her FBI handler suspicious? She was his lover.

I was reminded of these facts last month by *Slate*'s Jack Shafer, who used them to explain Phil Donahue's rapid demise. What worried me is that this confirms my memory of what it was like on C-SPAN before Brian Lamb put in the liberal-conservative and the Republican-Democratic lines. Back then, the questions struck me as tilting roughly two-to-one conservative.

One explanation of this phenomenon is that television news watchers are mostly older people. But whatever the reason, the danger is that television news will consciously or unconsciously slant its coverage to please its viewers' prejudices. The largely rah-rah coverage of the war against Iraq is a disturbing illustration of this tendency. For example, Judy Woodruff was one of only a handful of newscasters who seemed at all concerned about dead and wounded Iraqis. If all these conservatives hear only what they want to hear, it seems probably that we will be governed more and more by George Bushes and Tom DeLays.

To the lefties who are now and then permitted token appearances on these networks, I urge them to think of ways to shake up the rigidities of their audience. For example, whenever I'm on one of these shows, I try to make my case that Jesus was a liberal.

LET US HOPE OUR RECONSTRUCTION record in Afghanistan does not forecast our performance in Iraq. "Sixteen months after the ruling Taliban fell and Hamid Karzai took over as president, Afghanistan is still struggling to establish the basics of a working government," reports Marc Kaufman of *The Washington Post*. "Virtually every significant system in the country is broken."

A FRIEND OF MINE WAS LISTENing to Mona Charen being interviewed on C-SPAN a couple of weeks ago. He was gratified to hear her hold forth on how important it is to be civil and open-minded to people on the other side of the ideological aisle. Then he remembered that she was discussing her book about liberals entitled, *Useful Idiots*. Of course, it must be acknowledged that the Left has its Michael Moore who describes conservatives as *Stupid White Men*.

JUSTICE CHARLES E. RAMOS OF the New York State Supreme Court would be wise to avoid bar

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association gatherings for the foreseeable future. He has dared to question the size of the fee in the five-year-old tobacco settlement, suggesting that $13,000 an hour might be a bit excessive.

IF JOHN GRISHAM'S NEW BOOK, *The King of Torts*, has made you aware that the class-action bar is not always typified by Erin Brockovich, you might want to follow what the boys are up to on their own Web site, suitably named BigClassAction.com, where you get access to the group's newsletter, *Class Action and Large Recoveries*.

AIR MARSHALS SIT IN FIRST-class seats so they can be in the best position to intercept terrorists headed for the pilots' cabin. Now, a source of *The Washington Post*'s Sara Kehaulani Goo tells her, "There's a lot of pressure from congressional committees, from airlines" to move at least one marshal to coach. Why? "To give the airlines more high-price seats to sell." This is a classic example of how Congress will require an airline-safety measure, then weaken it under pressure from the airlines.

ANOTHER TROUBLING SIGN IN the realm of airline security is the report from *Time*'s Viveca Novak that "because of severe budget problems ... 3,000 airport screeners [will] be cut by June 1." One has to wonder if the budget problems have anything to do with the Bush tax cut.

Of course, some of the screeners may need replacing on competence grounds. One traveler, reports Audrey Hudson of *The Washington Times*, recently wrote Sen. Chuck Hagel (R-Neb.) "that he was separated from his group, his billfold, passport, and briefcase taken out of sight, his shoes removed, and he was ordered to stand on one foot." This was not possible, because the man was recovering from a leg fracture. But that did not deter the screener from the "persistent demand" that he stand on one foot at a time. Last summer, as I was waiting to board a flight from San Francisco, I was asked to remove my shoes not once, which seems reasonable, but twice, which doesn't—especially since I'm 75 and considerably past my potential terrorist prime.

THE PUSH TOWARD LEANNESS among homeland security personnel in the field does not seem to extend to the home office. Among the jobs available there are "travel aide to the chief of staff," "executive assistant to the deputy secretary," and "assistant press secretary to the assistant secretary for public affairs."

One thing is certain: No one seems to be sure how many employees the department has. Bush says 170,000; Ridge has used the same figure, as well as 180,000 and 190,000; Ann S. Tursic, the chief of the department's personnel security division, who sounds like she might really know, says the correct figure is 210,000.

Last year, as the new department was being created, we warned that new organizations do not necessarily do anything more than give the appearance of action, with desks moved, walls torn down, and new partitions built. What counted, we said, was that the individual agencies being moved around actually got better. At the Immigration and Naturalization Service, at least, this does not appear to be the case. The headline over a recent article by Jerry Seper of *The Washington Times*: "INS Tracking of Foreign Students Still Lagging."

WE ALSO SAID THAT TWO AGENCIES not part of the new department were more important to homeland security than any of those that were included, and that reform of these agencies—the FBI and the CIA—was the most urgent homeland security challenge facing the administration. Recent proof of the need for reform at the FBI came with the revelation by the Associated Press that "the Justice Department has identified about 3,000 criminal cases that could have been affected by flawed procedures and skewed testimony by FBI laboratory technicians."

The laboratory scandal was initially revealed by a senior chemist at the FBI who was repeatedly contradicted by top bureau officials, before they finally had to admit that he was right. Has the bureau's treatment of whistleblowers improved after 9/11? More than a year later, according to *The Washington Post*'s Dan Eggen, it had not. Last October, Robert Jordan, the head of the FBI's Office of Professional Responsibility, humiliated a whistleblower and picked someone else to serve in his job. The Justice Department's inspector general ruled that Jordan had left "the clear appearance of retaliation." But Jordan has not been fired or replaced. He's still on the job. His sole punishment: the loss of a salary bonus and the requirement that he undergo "counseling."

BUT THE FBI FARCE TO TOP them all is the just-revealed story of how Katrina Leung is said to have spied on us for China while the FBI was paying her $1.7 million to spy on China. Although some in the bureau grew suspicious of her in the early 1990s, the Los Angeles agent who was her handler said not to worry, he knew her well. He had, in fact, been her lover for 18 years. She chose her lovers wisely. Another was a former FBI agent who became director of security for the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, with all its juicy nuclear secrets.

I can see her greeting each of these fellows as they came in turn to her door: "Darling, fix yourself a drink, and let me take your briefcase."

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Deciphering the Democrats' Debacle

Why the Republican majority (probably) won't last.

BY RUY TEIXEIRA

LAST YEAR, JOHN JUDIS AND I PUBlished a book entitled *The Emerging Democratic Majority*, which argued that a series of economic, demographic, and ideological changes was laying the basis for a new Democratic majority that would materialize by decade's end—not certainly, we argued, but very probably as long as the Democratic Party put forth decent political leadership to challenge the dominant, but dwindling, current Republican majority.

Our book arrived in stores last September. Two months later, in the midterm elections, the Republicans surprised nearly everyone by winning control of the Senate and further solidifying their majority in the House, unifying Republican control of the federal government for only the second time in half a century. Needless to say, this wasn't my ideal outcome. In the annals of publishing, this wasn't quite so unfortunate as, say, James Glassman's prediction of a 36,000 point Dow just before the 2000 stock market crash, but it still evoked a fair amount of understandable ribbing and forced me to think hard about our thesis. So after the election, I pored over survey data, county-by-county voting returns, and a great deal of underlying demographic data and thought long and hard about what the data showed. And as a result, I've decided that ... we're still right!

The Myth of a 9/11 Majority

First, despite the Republican tsunami described by many media outlets, the actual electoral shift was quite mild. Though politically the election was a landmark, the underlying numbers suggest a continuing partisan balance. Democrats lost two seats in the Senate, six in the House, and gained three governorships. As nonpartisan analyst Charlie Cook has pointed out, "A swing of 94,000 votes out of 75,723,756 cast nationally would have resulted in the Democrats capturing control of the House and retaining a majority in the Senate on Nov. 5. If that had occurred, obituaries would have been written—inevitably and prematurely—about the presidency of George W. Bush. Instead, we are entertained by predictions that the Democratic Party, as we know it, may cease to exist."

Given the very evenness of partisan division in this country, even minor fluctuations in public sentiment can cause sudden lurches in political power. Indeed, the last election differed markedly from 1994, when huge Republican gains (52 House and nine Senate seats, 10 governorships) really did change the partisan balance dramatically.

Nevertheless, the shock of '02 initially devastated Democratic morale. Many in the party seemed helpless before the Republican success, ready to concede the 2004 election. For their part, Republicans were riding high, canonizing Karl Rove, and mentally fitting Bush for a spot on Mount Rushmore. Conservatives like Fred Barnes even spoke fondly of an "emerging 9/11 majority."

But that's begun to change. Democratic Sen. Mary Landrieu's December runoff victory in Louisiana put Republican triumphalism in perspective. Subsequent events have revived Democratic hopes, as Bush's approval ratings, especially on the economy, have fallen and his diplomatic failures leading up to the Iraq war have been exposed. That's not the only encouraging news. A careful reading of the election and its aftermath suggests the GOP position has serious underlying weaknesses. In fact, the Republican victory depended on a series of unsustainable advantages that a tough, smart Democratic effort should be able to counter, forcing a competitive 2004 election and the likely—though not certain—ascendancy that Judis and I predicted by the end of the decade.

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The White Stuff

The GOP's midterm wins depended heavily on their advantages in five areas that are either unlikely to persist or were overrated to begin with: a reliance on white voters, the growth of exurban voters, heavy GOP turnout, the tax-cut issue, and war. I'll tackle these in order.

Last November was all about the white vote. For all the talk of Republican minority outreach, the voters who showed up for the GOP on election day were, with few exceptions, white. In the 2000 election, 54 percent of whites voted for Bush and 56 percent for congressional Republicans; in 2002 that figure rose to 58 percent, which, coupled with higher turnout of whites, especially conservative whites, was enough for victory. Viewed one way, that's good news for Republicans, since whites comprise the overwhelming majority of U.S. voters. Trouble is, that majority is steadily diminishing. What's more, Republicans' core constituencies among white voters—those in rural areas, married men, married homemakers, and so forth—are also shrinking relative to other voter groups, which makes the demographic challenge of maintaining a majority even tougher.

As Matthew Dowd, polling director at the Republican National Committee, has pointed out, if minorities and whites vote in 2004 as they did in the 2000 election, Democrats will win by 3 million votes, for just that reason. In the long term, unless the GOP can make inroads among minority voters, they'll lose. In 2002, they made essentially no inroads at all. Recall that in the 2000 election, Al Gore got 90 percent of the black vote; in 2002, blacks appear to have voted at similar rates—if not slightly higher—for Democratic congressional and gubernatorial candidates. Hispanic support for Democrats was similarly rock solid, despite strenuous GOP outreach efforts. For example, California governor Gray Davis beat his Republican challenger Bill Simon by 65 to 24 percent among Hispanics—figures essentially identical to those by which Davis beat his 1998 challenger, Dan Lungren. Nationally, a Greenberg-Quinlan-Rosner poll taken after the 2002 election indicated that Hispanics supported Democrats by 62 to 38 percent, figures nearly identical to 1998 numbers.

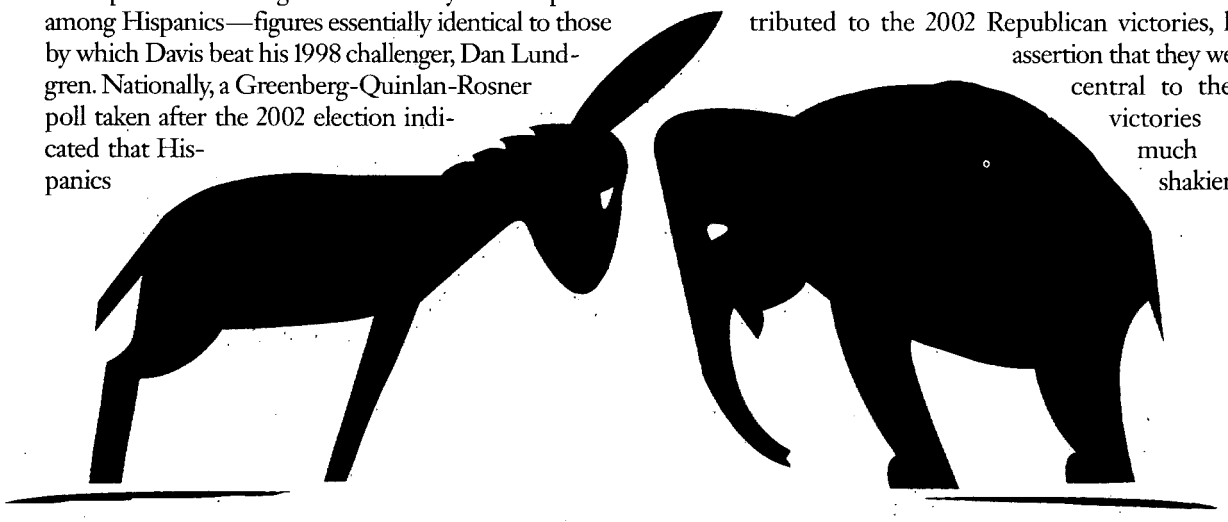
Research by political scientist James Gimpel confirms that Hispanic voting patterns haven't shifted. He found that Hispanics in 10 states polled by Fox News supported Democrats over Republicans in Senate races by more than two to one (67 percent to 33 percent). Democrats didn't fare quite so well among Hispanics in governors' races in these states (54 percent to 46 percent), but that result probably had a great deal to do with the inclusion of Florida and the noncompetitive Colorado election in their sample. Gimpel found little evidence that Latinos are moving toward the Republican Party, despite all the talk of Hispanics as swing voters.

What limited data there are on Asian voters indicate that they, too, haven't wavered in their support of Democrats. In California, Asians voted for Davis over Simon by 54 to 37 percent, similar to their preference for Al Gore over George Bush in 2000. In other words, practically all the available data indicates that minority support for Democrats didn't budge in this election. For the GOP, that's a very bad sign.

County Line

Republicans naturally want to make the case that their strong showing wasn't simply a result of demagoguing craven Democrats on national security. Surely, they'll tell you, there were deeper trends at work. One of the most fashionable of the theories put forward is that Republican gains reflected the rise of "exurbs"—those fast-growing edge counties on the fringes of large metropolitan areas that tend to vote Republican. Since these areas are booming, argue conservatives like David Brooks, who wrote an influential post-election article in *The New York Times*, the future belongs to the GOP.

But while Brooks is correct that exurbs contributed to the 2002 Republican victories, his assertion that they were central to these victories is much shakier.



Christina Larson

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Consider his two main examples, Colorado and Maryland. Colorado's quintessential exurb, Douglas County, just outside Denver, did vote overwhelmingly Republican in the state's Senate race, choosing Wayne Allard over Democrat Tom Strickland, 66 to 32 percent. That's about the same margin by which Bush beat Gore in Douglas County in 2000. But pull back a bit and the picture changes: The Denver-Boulder area as a whole voted for Democrat Strickland by a 6-point margin; that's larger than the 3-point victory Gore won in 2000, which in turn improved on Michael Dukakis's 1-point loss in 1988.

How can this be? Partly it's the influence of vote-rich Denver County, which is strongly Democratic and becoming more so. But another part of it is suburban Arapahoe and Jefferson counties around Denver that, as they've grown bigger, denser, and more diverse—less "exurban," if you will—have also become much less Republican. Arapahoe voted for Reagan in 1980 by 39 points, for Bush I in 1988 by 22 points and for W. in 2000 by only eight points. In the same period, Jefferson favored Reagan by 34 points, Bush by 15, and his son by just eight. These swings have contributed to a pro-Democratic trend in the Denver-Boulder area—a trend that buoyed Strickland's candidacy, rather than hurt it. The real story in Colorado was Strickland's poor showing elsewhere in the state, especially in small towns and rural areas.

Maryland's gubernatorial election is an even stronger refutation of the exurban thesis. To begin with, Democrats picked up two House seats in the 2002 election, and Gore beat Bush by 17 points in the last presidential election. While Republican gubernatorial candidate Robert Ehrlich did very well in exurban counties like Frederick (north of Washington, D.C.) and Harford (north of Baltimore), both of which already tend to vote Republican, Ehrlich's real coup was carrying counties Brooks doesn't mention—closer-in counties like Baltimore (the state's third-largest) and Howard (the state's fastest-growing county with more than 100,000 in population), both of which traditionally vote Democratic and have become more so over time. In other words, the real story is that Ehrlich's opponent, Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, ran a lousy race and lost many counties she should have won, and lost badly where she should have at least come close. Consequently, Ehrlich's victory hardly suggests an impending era of Republican exurban dominance in the very Democratic state of Maryland.

Elsewhere, examples of the exurban phenomenon run into the same problem: They are usually examples of—not the reasons for—pro-Republican voting. Take Northern Virginia's Loudon County, the sixth-fastest-growing county nationwide, cited by Brooks in another article. As Loudon has grown, it has grown more Democratic, moving from a 66-33 Republican advantage in 1988 to a much more modest 56-41 advantage in 2000. And, critically, the northern Virginia suburbs as a whole have shifted from a 20-point Republican edge to a mere two-point edge over that same period. Evidently, Loudon's booming growth isn't enough to stop a political trend toward voting Democratic, much less start one toward voting Republican.

In fact, Loudon County illustrates an important, and—for Democrats—positive trend: Many of these fast-growing, Republican-leaning exurban counties are part of larger metropolitan areas that are actually trending in the opposite direction. That's because exurban counties are generally too small to outweigh pro-Democratic developments elsewhere in large metropolitan areas, and also because as exurban counties become bigger, denser, and more diverse, they generally become less—not more—Republican. So, in a sense, today's right-leaning exurb is tomorrow's left-leaning suburb. This makes a strategy based on exurbs as they appear today—nearly all white and low density—a tenuous one. If the GOP expects long-term political dominance from the growth of these same counties, it's likely to be disappointed.

Turn On, Tune In, Turnout

The 2002 election was also an aberration from the perspective of voter turnout. Usually, it's the Democrats who fire up their base and deliver a bravura performance of getting voters to the polls. Last year, however, Democrats dragged their feet, while Republicans did an outstanding job. The GOP's "72-Hour Project" did particularly well, boosting white turnout. But Democrats didn't match this effort among their base; while minorities supported them at typically high rates, fewer showed up at the polls. In California, a *Los Angeles Times* exit poll—the only functioning exit poll in the nation—indicated that only 4 percent of voters in 2002 were black, compared to 13 percent in 1998. That's almost certainly an underestimate, but it does suggest a substantial falloff. The same poll indicated that just 10 percent of California voters in 2002 were Hispanic, down from 13 percent in 1998. And Gimpel's study of Fox News polls in 10 states indicates that Hispanics of low to middle income and education were much less likely to vote last year than those of high income and education, meaning that not only was Hispanic turnout likely lower in 2002, but those who did show up were unusually unrepresentative of the Hispanic community in a way that hurt Democrats and helped Republicans. (Turnout was especially low among independent Latinos with middling levels of education, who tend to vote heavily Democratic.)

More broadly, county-level voting returns suggest

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that turnout in Democratic-leaning large cities and inner suburbs, even where it did not decline, did not keep pace with increases in Republican-leaning exurbs and rural areas, which, on the whole, were highly mobilized. In Missouri, for example, the increase in votes cast over the 1998 election was much more moderate in heavily Democratic St. Louis city and Democratic-leaning St. Louis County than in the heavily Republican suburb of St. Charles County and especially in rural and extremely Republican Cape Girardeau County. The same pattern was true in Minnesota, where many Republican-leaning rural counties seemed to show exceptionally high turnouts, while Democratic-leaning urban ones lagged behind.

Of course, the relatively low turnout among minorities and in Democratic areas probably didn't matter much in states like California, where the Democrats prevailed by a large margin, or Florida, where they were so far behind that no reasonable increment of minority turnout could conceivably have saved them. But in close races like Missouri's, it may have cost the Democrats victory—and perhaps nationwide also, since it only took a swing of two seats for Republicans to take the Senate.

So the GOP was clearly the turnout party in 2002. But it's unlikely to be able to repeat this. To begin with, Democrats won't be caught napping again. They've launched their own version of the "72-Hour Project" called "Project 5104"—shorthand for winning 51 percent of the vote in '04. The labor movement will match this expanded turnout initiative with its "Partnership for Working Families," which will target not just union voters, but also non-union liberals and Democratic-leaning voters in the party's 158 million-voter database.

Of course, better mechanics alone can't make up for low motivation, which was clearly one of the reasons Democratic voters didn't turn out in 2002. But three things will be different next time around. First, the 9/11 effect will have dissipated, and far fewer voters will be patriotically inclined to give President Bush the benefit of the doubt. Second, the Democrats are learning that "No ideas don't beat bad ideas." In 2002, they had no agreed upon economic policy, no plausible alternative foreign policy, and a handful of domestic program proposals like prescription drug benefits for seniors that Republicans neutralized with vague proposals of their own. Leading Democrats now know they need a broader agenda to give Democratic-leaning voters reason to show up. Finally, nothing drives voters to the polls like anger—the desire to strike a blow against the opponent. That desire was absent in 2002 due to a short-term confusion among many Democratic voters and lawmakers about whether and how to oppose Bush. But the president's virulent partisanship has erased such concerns among Democratic-leaning voters. In a recent *Los Angeles Times* poll, for example, 95 percent of Republicans approved of Bush's job performance, compared to just 28 percent of Democrats. This extraordinarily high point spread shows that non-Republican voters have become alienated by the administration's hard-right policies on everything from tax cuts and Medicare to Iraq. Bush may indeed be mobilizing his own base—but in the process he's mobilizing the other side's, too.

The Republican victory in 2002 relied on a series of unsustainable advantages that a tough, smart Democratic effort should be able to counter.

Tithes that Bind

It is an article of faith in the GOP these days that there is no such thing as a bad tax cut. Indeed, this extraordinary concept has overshadowed the "compassionate conservatism" Bush touted in his 2000 campaign. So the Republicans are betting, at least domestically, on the political appeal of tax cuts. They had an easy time of it in 2001, and now they're proposing a new round, including the complete elimination of the dividend tax. The Democrats didn't dare run against tax cuts last November, they reason, so why should the future be any different?

But early reaction to Bush's new tax-cut plan is remarkably tepid considering that the public's initial reaction to any new economic proposal (if no potential drawbacks are cited) tends to be positive. In this case, the lack of enthusiasm has a great deal to do with the fact that just 22 percent of the public paid any direct dividend tax at all last year. And a closer examination of the general apathy toward Bush's latest cuts reveals a remarkable fact: More people now think the amount of federal income tax they pay is "about right" (50 percent) than think it is "too high" (47 percent). Someone resuscitate Grover Norquist! According to Gallup, the last time the public felt this good about paying their taxes was March 1949. Perhaps this wasn't the ideal time to propose a large, deficit-ballooning tax cut for the rich after all.

Sure enough, survey data from a Greenberg-Quinlan-Rosner poll shows that Bush's new plan is sparking

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much less interest than his first tax cut did in January 2001. Back then, 49 percent thought Bush's proposal was good for the middle class, while 42 percent disagreed; this time just 37 percent think it's good for the middle class, compared to 48 percent who don't.

Other recent survey questions reveal that the public may have had its fill of tax cuts. By more than two to one, people would prefer more spending on education, health care, and Social Security to Bush's proposed tax cut (ABC); 61 percent believe the Bush plan will be "just somewhat" or "not very" effective in stimulating the economy (NBC); almost twice as many think the Bush economic plan would benefit the wealthy over Americans as a whole (NBC); 56 percent believe that if the Bush plan mostly benefits the wealthy, it will be an ineffective way to stimulate the economy (NBC). The public also expresses a preference for a stimulus program focused on infrastructure spending (roads, bridges, schools) rather than tax cuts, and by a whopping margin is nervous about the prospect of Social Security funds helping to fund the government if Bush's tax cut goes through. In other words, it's a considerably less friendly world for tax cuts in 2003 than it was in 2001 and—partly reflecting this fact—this time Democrats are lining up to oppose them.

Polling data suggests that this is a doubly smart move. Not only are tax cuts unpopular, but voters believe them to be an ineffective remedy for the public's real area of concern: the lousy economy. A recent Pew poll revealed that more people disapprove of Bush's performance on tax policy (44 percent) than approve of it (42 percent). On the economy, the president fares even worse. Before the invasion of Iraq, he was regularly drawing approval ratings in this area in the low 40s (and only in the high 30s among political independents, the best simple proxy for swing voters), with disapproval ratings in the low 50s. He received a slight bump from the war (rallying around the president on one issue commonly bleeds into unrelated areas), but is heading right back down. Should that continue into '04, being identified with tax cuts is likely to be a liability, even in the short term. Over the long term, the fiscal damage wrought by tax cuts drains the economy, generates huge deficits, and ensures that voters' priorities can't be met: hardly a recipe for political dominance.

The Spoiler of War

That brings us to the GOP's biggest advantage in the last election and the one they're clearly relying on to carry them through the next: war and national security. Right now, the Bush administration's war in Iraq enjoys the support of about 70 percent of the American public. But even this advantage is unlikely to last. The war is temporarily suppressing Americans' genuine skepticism about the administration's approach to foreign policy, and the underlying softness of their support means that they could quickly tire of a lengthy occupation and the ancillary foreign and security problems.

For example, before the invasion, polls showed that Americans opposed invading Iraq without U.N. support and strongly supported giving weapons inspectors more time, reflecting the public's overwhelming view that Iraq was a long-range, not an immediate, threat. And while general, no-conditions-specified questions about military action against Saddam Hussein always elicited support, this ebbed once stipulations were raised about U.S., and even Iraqi, casualties or about the possibility of a long-term occupation—now a certainty. Moreover, moderates and independents held these viewpoints more strongly than the broader public, indicating that this was the true center of U.S. public opinion.

In other words, the public held a very different view of Iraq than the president did. The administration espoused an evolving ideology that essentially relies on asserting unilateral American power, while the public preferred a more nuanced and pragmatic approach of working through allies—more Wesley Clark, if you will, than Donald Rumsfeld. And, like Clark, they were inclined to see Iraq as more of an "elective war" than one waged out of necessity.

Of course, after the troops hit the ground, these doubts and nuances gave way to patriotic support. But they remain, evident even in post-invasion polls—such as Gallup's—that consistently find just 59 percent supporting the war as "the right thing to do," while the remaining 11-13 percent who favor it do so out of a desire "to support the troops" (25-27 percent oppose the war outright). There is more doubt and even opposition than during the first Gulf War or the attack against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Consequently, the public is less likely to cut Bush slack if the Middle East situation worsens than it was immediately following 9/11.

Besides, to truly benefit from being hawkish, it helps if your opponent is a softie whose party is implicated in a major foreign policy debacle. Today's Democratic Party is not handicapped by this and seems more intent on channeling the spirit of John F. Kennedy than George McGovern or Jimmy Carter. Four of the five leading candidates for the Democratic nomination voted for the resolution supporting Bush on Iraq. And the voguish term for today's Democratic frontrunner, decorated Vietnam veteran John Kerry isn't "pinko," but "tough dove."

The Road Ahead

Despite all the evidence that Republicans are not assured of winning in 2004, Democrats are hardly certain

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to knock off a sitting president. What the 2002 election and its aftermath reveal is that the underlying trends identified in *The Emerging Democratic Majority* have not been negated; they've been temporarily overwhelmed by Republican successes. The country is still changing in ways congenial to Democrats. A Democratic Party that practices smart, tough politics and fields viable candidates faces no fundamental obstacle to achieving political dominance by decade's end.

But let's get serious—can we really expect that from the Democrats? That's what Republicans ask—and even many Democrats, who see the weaknesses in the current GOP position, but can't quite bring themselves to subscribe to the message of my book. The truth is that many intelligent members of both parties believe the Republicans to be the only true practitioners of effective politics.

Perhaps this is why my party is currently out of power, but I believe differently. Take the Democrats' minority vote. Skeptics will point out that that devious Karl Rove has access to the same numbers I've laid out above and will certainly devise a plan to snare minority voters for Republicans in 2004 and beyond. True as far as it goes, but it doesn't mean he'll succeed. The 2002 elections showed just how little success Republicans have enjoyed so far. The fact of the matter is that the partisan affiliations, policy priorities, and views on the role of government of blacks and Hispanics skew dramatically toward the Democrats. It's going to be difficult for Republicans to change their own priorities and approach to government enough to appeal to these groups and break down their Democratic affiliations.

So what about the gender gap? Isn't the GOP making headway there as smart, tough Republican operatives take advantage of women's sensitivity to public safety issues to move them away from the Democrats? Not really. Survey data from the 2002 election indicates that the gender gap favored Democrats about as much as it ever has. Gallup, whose pre-election poll nailed the result almost perfectly, had the gender gap slightly larger last year than in 2000. And Gallup data indicate that what really drove the surge toward Republicans just before the election was not security-conscious women, but those reliable Republican stand-bys: white men.

Now, it is true that women are substantially more likely than men to fear being the victim of a terrorist attack (see "Homeland Security is for Girls," *The Washington Monthly*, April 2003). So, even though it wasn't much of a factor in 2002, perhaps those worried women will gravitate toward the GOP's national security toughness over the longer haul? Not likely. On virtually every poll question one might care to look at, women are less likely than men to trust and support Bush administration policies on Iraq and related issues, the main vehicle through which the president is supposedly fighting terrorist attacks. Before the war started, a *Los Angeles Times* poll showed that more women opposed a U.S. invasion of Iraq without Security Council blessing than supported it; and even after war began, far fewer women than men approve of the way Bush is handling the situation.

Beyond that, look at the record Bush has amassed on his 2000 campaign promises. "Compassionate conservatism" flummoxed hapless Democrats the first time around, but by now the administration has several years of not-so-compassionate baggage to explain away. And its hard-right policies on the environment, Medicare, Social Security, tax cuts, and Iraq have polarized Democrats against them (so much for being "a uniter not a divider") and alienated moderates and independents—the principal targets of compassionate conservatism in the first place. In other words, a party's policies and track record set real limits to what smartness and toughness can accomplish. The idea that Karl Rove can negate all this simply by waving his magic wand should not be taken seriously by Democrats or anyone else. What the Democrats should take seriously is the need to fight back and fight back hard, so they can exploit the underlying trends that are moving the country in a Democratic direction.

But these are trends, not guarantees. They're meaningless unless Democrats can find the right combination of politics and ideas to fire up their base while appealing to independents and other swing voters. Can they do it?

There are encouraging signs. From Sen. Landrieu's hard-fought special election to congressional Democrats' relentless campaign against the latest Bush tax cut to the hawkish position of most Democratic frontrunners, the party is in the process of refashioning itself to take advantage of Republican weaknesses and—just as important—avoid dumb mistakes. They need to build on this in 2004 and beyond by articulating an agenda that goes beyond reining in Republican excess and defending Social Security. Again, the signs are encouraging. The Democratic frontrunners, who set the tone for the party, have advanced serious proposals in areas like education, health care, pension reform, and international relations that could give voters a reason to back the Democrats.

John Judis and I argued that a Democratic majority was likely by the decade's end. That's still where I'd place my bet. But all the evidence I've laid out here suggests that Bush and the Republicans are vulnerable sooner, if Democrats can exploit those weaknesses. That would mean new ideas and compelling candidates. But, if they pull it off, that majority could come much sooner than you think—maybe even in 2004. You can say you read it here first.

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The Agony of Ecstasy

How a suburban party diversion is becoming a dangerous street drug.

BY BENJAMIN WALLACE-WELLS

UNTIL TWO YEARS AGO, TOM LOWE'S job was about as easy and worry-free as an undercover cop's can get. Lowe, the lead Ecstasy investigator for the Pennsylvania attorney general, spent most of his professional time going to raves—vast dance parties held in abandoned warehouses or clubs and fueled by Ecstasy and electronic music. The dealers he busted, like the parties' patrons, were mostly peaceable white suburban kids, too trusting and naive to think that a cop could have even found a rave. They sold Ecstasy to him eagerly, and often without suspicion, and then he arrested them. Kids like this, more interested in partying with their friends than vetting buyers, were pretty easy pickings for Lowe, who'd cut his teeth making cocaine buys in Detroit. The hardest part of his job, he told me, had been changing the way he dressed to keep up with the latest raver trends, and making sure he knew enough about current electronic music to pass for an earnest, older raver.

But Lowe's job has gotten harder, and the raver act he'd become so good at doesn't play so well anymore. In recent years, the Ecstasy market has expanded beyond the rave scene, and more sophisticated and dangerous drug organizations have begun to elbow in on what had been mostly a friend-to-friend, white suburban trade. Last year, Lowe put some gun-toting Latin Kings gang members in jail for Ecstasy distribution in York, Pa., after a long and difficult investigation. The drug, for Lowe, has left the trusting insularity of the rave scene and begun to move out onto the streets, where dealers are more violent, more profit-conscious, and far more wary about undercover buyers like Tom Lowe. "It's a whole new ballgame," he says. "It's not just white suburban ravers anymore."

The trends Lowe has seen in warehouses and parking lots around suburban Pennsylvania have begun to emerge nationally. The market for Ecstasy has begun to expand from those ravers into a broader user demographic—one that is both older and younger, more racially diverse, and includes people who do their drugs not at big raves but home alone. No longer a niche drug, Ecstasy has begun to attract organized, professional drug gangs. In some cities, the drug is sold on the street alongside crack and heroin, by dealers who thrive on the repeat business afforded by addicts and junkies; since Ecstasy is not itself physically addictive, they've begun cutting it with drugs that are, like methamphetamines. Ecstasy, in other words, is becoming a street drug. "We're seeing the same things with Ecstasy that we did with cocaine in 1979," says Mark Kleiman, a professor of public policy at UCLA. The user group is expanding, prices are declining, and professional gangs are muscling in. If this new trend continues, Ecstasy may no longer be the largely self-contained, relatively low-risk diversion that it has been, but a potential gateway to addiction and violence for millions of young Americans.

Can this transformation be stopped? Some experts think so, but the solution probably can't be found on either side of the conventional drug-policy debate. The government's current anti-Ecstasy enforcement sys-

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tem, favored by law-and-order elected officials, clearly isn't working: Ecstasy's "streetification" is happening despite a series of tough new laws aimed at cracking down harder on its use. On the other hand, legalizing Ecstasy, as many libertarians would have us do, might eliminate the criminal underworld, but only at the cost of dramatically increasing the number of users, many of them teenagers. And Ecstasy might not be as harmless as its advocates seem to think.

Photo by J. Kyle Keener

The Ecstasy market has now expanded beyond teenagers at raves, like this one near Eastern Market in Detroit.

Club Crackers

Ecstasy is the most common street name for a synthesized chemical, 3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA), which was originally patented in 1914 by German chemists working for Merck. Nobody's been able to document what purpose they had in mind for the drug, but whatever it was, it didn't work, and MDMA went unused for most of the century. In the early 1980s, recreational use of the drug began to grow in the American South and Southwest. New users discovered a drug that could make them feel euphorically happy for as long as six hours—hence its street name—and increase their sensitivity to touch, taste, and smell. But in 1985, after researchers testified that Ecstasy caused brain damage in rats, it was outlawed by the Drug Enforcement Administration, which classified Ecstasy as a Schedule I controlled substance—the most restrictive designation, shared by heroin, PCP, and mescaline. Ecstasy migrated to Western Europe in the late 1980s, where it was most heavily and most publicly used by white teenagers at the intense, all-night dance parties that came to be known as raves.

During the early 1990s, raves started to migrate to the United States, where electronic music was becoming hot. Ecstasy migrated back along with them. It helped that the drug had good advance press—users billed it as a good, fun high, with no readily apparent downside. Those were Ecstasy's early days, when psychologists were still trumpeting the drug's potential as a therapeutic aid (those trumpets have since faded) and it was mostly discussed as part of the rave culture—a culture which psychologists and cops alike regarded with the bewildered, an-thropological interest of Stanley peering into the Congo for the first time. The ravers wore baggy clothes, they noted, and waved glowsticks, of all things, while dancing energetically for hours. The drug seemed to enhance users' sense of touch, and so members of the opposite sex seemed to touch each other a lot, they observed, and the young ladies tended to dress very provocatively indeed. The shrinks tended to think of Ecstasy as another what's-the-harm, makes-you-feel-better drug like marijuana. The cops were decidedly more skeptical.

"The scenes within the clubs were bizarre," a New Jersey investigator named Andrea Craparotta told Congress in 2000. "What I observed was shocking and many of the images were covertly captured on surveillance tape ... Unlike the thin, pale look of many heroin and crack cocaine users, Ecstasy users are primarily well-built, well-groomed, young adults with healthy outward appearances ... young adults would take Ecstasy and begin gyrating oddly to the pulsating 'techno' music ... patrons would constantly touch one another, regardless of gender. Sex acts were often simulated on the dance floor." With horror stories like these (Simulated sex acts! Odd gyrations!), it's no wonder the authorities began to respond.

And as the drug's popularity began to grow, so did the federal government's interest in it. In 1991, the FDA permitted researchers to begin testing MDMA's effect on human subjects, and the National Institutes of Health funded research which concluded that Ecstasy had the potential to cause long-term damage to the brain's serotonin system, which helps to regulate sleep and mood. (Among scientists, this research was and continues to be deeply controversial, but the government and law enforcement have mostly accepted the serotonin-damage hypothesis as fact.) And as the drug's popularity grew throughout the 1990s, so

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did the attention and resources the DEA and other law enforcement agencies have devoted to it. In 1996, for the first time, the University of Michigan's Monitoring the Future study, a federally funded, comprehensive national survey that examines drug use among school-age children, added Ecstasy to its questionnaire. At that time, 6.1 percent of high school seniors reported having used the drug; five years later, that number had nearly doubled.

But it was the increase in Ecstasy traffic that finally caught the attention of Congress. In May 2000, Sen. Bob Graham (D-Fla.) sponsored the Ecstasy Anti-Proliferation Act, which brought federal penalties for Ecstasy possession into line with those for cocaine and heroin. The act cited a dramatic increase in traffic: the Customs Services had seized 500,000 tablets in 1997, and 4 million in the first five months of 2000, when the act was introduced. Graham's bill also galvanized state legislatures, many of which stiffened their own criminal penalties for trading and possessing Ecstasy in 2000 and 2001. Perhaps most importantly, it focused the efforts of the law enforcement community on Ecstasy. In October 2001, Sen. Charles Grassley (R-Iowa) told the Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control that Ecstasy was a "deadly drug" which was "targeting our youth." That same year, CNN claimed America was in the grip of an Ecstasy "epidemic."

All the Rave

So is Ecstasy really as dangerous as drug-enforcement authorities would have it? The answer is, probably not—at least in the short term. Unlike heroin or cocaine, the drug itself is not physically addictive, though rehab centers have begun to report an increase in the number of people seeking treatment for psychological dependence on Ecstasy. And while users of hallucinogens like acid or mushrooms sometimes have "bad trips"—a chemically induced state of acute panic—anecdotal evidence suggests that those who take Ecstasy rarely do. (Reliable numbers are extraordinarily difficult to come by, because most researchers seem to blame most Ecstasy-related bad trips on corrupted drugs, or other drugs passed off as Ecstasy.) And though long-term users seem to experience highs of declining intensity after dozens of uses, scientists who study the drug aren't sure why. In a few, extremely rare cases, and particularly when users have been dancing vigorously—a hallmark of the rave culture—Ecstasy seems to be linked to sudden heart attacks in healthy young people who do not appear otherwise disposed to heart failure. (This is also true of the widely available, over-the-counter supplement ephedrine.) In the case of Ecstasy, researchers have speculated that it somehow suppresses the body's ability to sense dramatic increases in its own temperature, leading the heart to overpump and overheat the body; some also suspect that the deaths might be largely due to impure Ecstasy cut with amphetamines, which are known to increase users' heart rates. But ravers have adapted, learning to drink lots of fluids, which helps keep their body temperatures down—go to any rave today, and you'll see hundreds of teenagers dancing with bottles of water in one hand.

Then, too, each drug is its own best and worst advertisement, and Ecstasy sells itself pretty well. In the '70s, when crystal meth first popped up on the streets of San Francisco, everybody knew pretty quickly that this was dangerous stuff: there were all these bikers running around freaked out, prone to violence, and too hopped up to function normally. Similarly, the crack epidemic died down in the mid-'90s, police and drug policy analysts think, in large part because young people growing up in crack-ridden neighborhoods saw how devastating and unshakeable that drug could be. Like marijuana, Ecstasy's a much better advertisement for itself. For the most part, chronic users seem functional—they hold down jobs and stay in touch with family and friends.

What's still not clear, however, is the effects Ecstasy has over the long term. Scientists are undecided on whether chronic use causes permanent brain damage—and will probably remain so, since the drug has only been used recreationally for about 20 years, too brief a span for any meaningful long-term studies of lifetime users. "There's a very good chance that Ecstasy may turn out to be very harmless, something like marijuana, and I'm confident that it's not as dangerous to use as cocaine and heroin," Patrick Murphy, a professor of public policy and a drug policy researcher at the University of San Francisco, told me. "But there exists the possibility that chronic use could make people very, very depressed." What we don't know about long-term Ecstasy effects alone militates against outright legalization of the drug. But as it turns out, a determined, across-the-board effort to crack down on everyone who uses it might not be much better.

Down the Drug Supply Chain

Last spring, plainclothes detectives from a joint state and local force swarmed onto a foggy Camden ,

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N.J., dock and pried open an orange metal cargo container that was supposed to hold fresh fruit. They found what they expected—about $3 million worth of cocaine and heroin and a couple of dozen automatic weapons—and arrested the gang members for whom the cargo was intended. But there was something else in there, stuffed alongside the powdered drugs: thousands of Ecstasy pills. "The Ecstasy was a surprise," said a spokesman for the Camden County District Attorney's Office.

It was a surprise because they hadn't thought that these sophisticated gangs were dealing Ecstasy. But it made sense. During the past two years, in parking lots along the Black Horse and White Horse Pikes—seamy commercial strips in South Jersey—they'd been picking up street dealers with Ecstasy as well as their traditional products, cocaine and heroin. Ecstasy, they realized, was inching its way down the supply chain for hardcore drugs. By the time the Office of National Drug Control Policy put out its monthly Pulse Check report last November, the trend—a more diverse user population, and a more professional caste of dealers—was showing up across the nation. Ecstasy was being sold along with crack, cocaine, and methamphetamines in Baltimore, Philadelphia, Denver, and Miami. Organized Ecstasy gangs were reported in cities as far-flung as Portland, Maine, and El Paso, Texas.

Ecstasy, it turns out, isn't a big profit center for dealers the way heroin and cocaine are, for the simple reason that it isn't addictive. The reason drug distributors have started to add it to their wares, suggests Rob MacCoun, a professor of public policy and law at the University of California-Berkeley, is that "they want to meet the diverse needs of their market"—customers ask for the drug, so the dealers feel they must provide it or risk losing those customers to more willing competitors. Yet when cut with amphetamines or other addictive drugs, Ecstasy becomes an ideal vehicle for hooking young people on the harder stuff.

The geography of Ecstasy has been changing, too. In New York, New Orleans, and Washington, D.C., reported the ONDCP, Ecstasy was most frequently being bought in inner-city ghettos rather than suburban raves. Most ominously, its sales were moving outdoors—a leading indicator for the kind of gang violence and street-corner shootouts that have devastated so many poor neighborhoods during the crack epidemic. Once a dealer begins selling his drugs in a public place to people he doesn't know, he becomes a prime target for robbery. To protect himself, he carries a gun—and so the thieves do, too. "A street market for any expensive drug is going to be enormously disruptive to the community," Kleiman said. "This is where MDMA can get scary."

Until recently, Ecstasy has been relatively safe, and distributed in pure, non-addictive form by nonviolent amateurs. But professional drug traffickers are entering the market, aiming to turn today's ravers into tomorrow's crackheads.

Gateway High

So Ecstasy presents a novel dilemma. Until recently, it's been a drug that is relatively safe, popular among teenagers, and distributed mainly by nonviolent amateur dealers who sell the pure, non-addictive version of the drug. But it is becoming a drug controlled by violent, professional drug traffickers, who routinely mix the drug with more dangerous, addictive—and, hence, profitable—substances, and who aim to convert today's Ecstasy users into tomorrow's crackheads, to turn Ecstasy into what it has not yet become: A gateway drug.

The challenge for policymakers, then, is to break the connection that's now being made between Ecstasy users and organized drug dealers, before it becomes a full-fledged street drug with an attendant culture of violence and addiction. And that means distinguishing between the kind of large-scale distribution that will destroy neighborhoods and lives, and the small-scale culture of social Ecstasy use and informal dealing that probably won't. Ecstasy should be illegal. But what's needed is an enforcement regime that keeps teenagers who do use it away from street gangs.

Unfortunately, current policy is trending in exactly the opposite direction. Undercover operations, for instance, now focus heavily on raves, primarily targeting users and casual dealers rather than large-scale distributors. In California, legislators introduced a bill last year that would make it harder for rave promoters to get permits, and make them civilly liable for

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any injury suffered by anyone high on drugs at their parties. In Congress, Sens. Joe Biden (D-Del.) and Charles Grassley (R-Iowa) crafted a bill making the promoters criminally liable for drug use in much the same way that people who own crack houses are. The bill was tabled at the end of last year, but passed in April, after being tucked into popular legislation to create an "Amber Alert" system. Meanwhile, district attorneys from Chicago to New Orleans have been prosecuting rave promoters under local laws originally passed to target owners of crack houses.

The laws are not only unfair—if someone buys a pill of Ecstasy at a bar, runs into a pole, and puts himself in a wheelchair, his parents don't get to sue the bar owner—but counterproductive. And at best, it will make buying Ecstasy at a rave no less risky than buying it on the street, from dealers looking to get them hooked on coke; at worst, the new legislation will focus law enforcement efforts disproportionately on raves, actively driving users into the arms of hardcore street dealers.

The same societally destructive incentives are increasingly being built into legal penalties for Ecstasy use and sale. The federal sentence for anyone possessing more than 8,000 Ecstasy pills now is a mandatory minimum of 10 years. This makes sense; no casual user or amateur dealer would have 8,000 pills on hand. (If you were to take a new pill each time your last high ended—which nobody does—it would take you more than five years to use up 8,000 pills.) Federal law, and most state and local laws, also mandate quite modest penalties for possession of small amounts of the drug—many states, like Delaware and Minnesota, match possession penalties for Ecstasy with those for marijuana, and allow judges to punish violators with simple fine. This, too, makes sense. Ecstasy simply isn't as dangerous as drugs like crack. Because the uncut Ecstasy traded among ravers is not physically addictive, it's not likely to create populations of prostitutes and thieves who commit crimes to feed their habit. Nor do the drug's users die from overdosing, as users of cocaine and heroin often do. Moreover, the rapid growth of Ecstasy use has recently tapered off.

Yet despite all this, state and local elected officials are pushing to stiffen penalties for possessing or sell-

Safety Dance

ANOTHER PROBLEM WITH THE new anti-rave laws is the effort to crack down on volunteer groups which test ecstasy for purity at raves. San Francisco-based DanceSafe, for instance, does most of its work by mail: Users send in pills from dealers who claim to be selling Ecstasy, and for no charge, DanceSafe tests the chemical composition of the pills and posts the results on its Web site. The results can be eye-opening: Many of the pills have no MDMA in them at all, and some are cut with dangerous, addictive uppers like codeine or methamphetamines. Cops and legislators who specialize in club drugs know about DanceSafe, and when they're arguing for stiffer penalties against dealers, they cite DanceSafe's tests to show that dealers frequently change their product's chemistry to make it more addictive, and dangerous.

But these same legislators and cops are reluctant to allow those same tests to ensure Ecstasy is safe for users. These testing organizations would like to operate mobile testing facilities at raves—so that rather than the weeks-long lag of sending pills to San Francisco and waiting for the tests to come back—users can know right away whether their pills are safe. But cops refuse to let these organizations operate at raves, out of an understandable fear that they would be tacitly endorsing drug use. The current effort by prosecutors attempting to make rave promoters civilly and criminally liable for drug dealing would for all practical purposes prohibit on-site testing: If a rave promoter tolerates drug testing at his events, it will be very difficult for him to argue in court that he wasn't aware drugs were used at his raves.

But instead of keeping kids safe from drugs, banning testing organizations might just do the opposite. While Ecstasy isn't itself addictive, most experts agree that the likelihood of Ecstasy users taking up other drugs will only increase as street dealers take over the market, cutting Ecstasy or selling it along with other, addictive drugs. "Pure" Ecstasy won't turn you into an addict. But if your MDMA is cut with crystal meth, you're more likely to go back for more. And if your dealer sells cocaine, too, you're more likely to try the new drug than a user who otherwise might not know where to get it. So legislators and cops alike ought to be friendly towards non-profit testing groups which can help to guarantee the purity—and consequently the safety—of the Ecstasy sold at raves. Local governments themselves do not need to operate testing stations. But they should be encouraged to permit Ecstasy testing at raves as a concession to public health—which is, incidentally, very similar to how needle-exchange programs work.

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ing small amounts of Ecstasy to bring them in line with drugs like methamphetamines, and, to a slightly lesser extent, heroin and cocaine. Simple possession in Georgia means a mandatory minimum of two years in prison. A failed 2001 bill in Illinois threatened a mandatory minimum of six years in jail for possession of 15 tablets of Ecstasy. And Texas mandates two years in jail for anyone caught with one gram of Ecstasy or more (one gram is equivalent to about four pills). Such high penalties, if they become common, will not only fill the nation's prisons with non-violent Ecstasy users. They will also drive frightened amateur rave dealers out of business, with both positive and negative consequences. On the plus side, fewer dealers at raves should lead to less Ecstasy consumption among casual users. On the minus side, it will almost certainly drive the more determined young users toward the serious traffickers, where more addictive drugs and other dangers await.

What's needed, instead, is a two-tracked policy. Penalties and enforcement should be extremely tough on high-volume traffickers and their street-level dealers, with much lower penalties for, and less enforcement against, users and amateurs who peddle small quantities of the drug to friends and acquaintances. Instead of cracking down on raves, law enforcement should recognize that rave-based Ecstasy use will be relatively safe, especially if they tolerate the presence of testing organizations that can help ensure that users don't move on to other drugs (see sidebar). The model here is the Dutch program of allowing users to smoke pot in licensed cannabis shops. Dutch lawmakers saw that whereas cannabis use in itself was relatively benign, dangers emerged when cannabis users bought from dealers who also sold cocaine, heroin, and other hard drugs, which thrust them into a more violent drug market and exposed them to addiction. The Dutch policy has been moderately successful in keeping pot smokers away from hard drugs, according to Berkeley's MacCoun and Peter Reuter of the University of Maryland. Only 22 percent of marijuana users in Holland report having tried cocaine; 33 percent of American pot smokers say they have. (Heroin use among pot smokers in America and Holland is statistically identical). "It's an approach which we haven't been willing to consider in America—separating the users from the real harm," MacCoun said. Raves could play a similar role for Ecstasy, containing use of the drug and keeping teenagers out of the orbit of street dealers. That wouldn't necessitate making Ecstasy legal. But it would require an attitudinal shift: Legislators and police officials would have to focus on reducing the harm caused by Ecstasy, and not simply on reducing the number of users.

Crime and Punishment

It's true, of course, that having an Ecstasy strategy that punishes low-level users and dealers far less harshly than large-scale distributors will inevitably raise charges of racism. Why should prosecutors and police let suburban white kids who do the drugs at raves and deal to their friends slide by, while cracking down harshly on criminal gangs typically led by immigrants, blacks, and Hispanics? For the simple reason that some dealers are a clear threat to the communities in which they traffic, and others are not. The sentencing disparities between cocaine and crack, for instance, are deeply unjust, putting manyfold more blacks than whites behind bars for consuming or selling what is in essence the same chemical. Yet most opponents of this injustice concede that there should be at least somewhat stiffer penalties for crack, because that form of the drug is simply more destructive to users, neighborhoods, and society generally. Moreover, a two-track penalty scheme for Ecstasy would mean relatively light treatment for all users regardless of their color. Only the big drug traffickers and their dealers would suffer.

This makes sense. I've seen this distinction while covering the Ecstasy debate: Some drug dealers carry automatic weapons, and others lose their socks. Nine months ago I interviewed Andrew, a 17-year-old user and low-level dealer from South Jersey who'd been busted by an undercover cop. The judge in Andrew's case took pity on him and sentenced him to a rehab clinic; I met him at a coffee shop after he'd been released, last fall. He was 20 minutes late and apologized; he'd wanted to be on time but then he couldn't find clean socks. I asked him when he'd started dealing and why, and he wasn't sure. For Andrew, as for many Ecstasy users, there was a substantial gray area between using and dealing—if you give your buddy a pill, and he lets you crash at his place for a night in return and buys you dinner, are you a dealer? Andrew asked me about applying to colleges; he said he wanted to major in business. I knew someone in admissions at Dartmouth, I told him, a little helplessly. If he applied, maybe I could put in a good word. The judge had been right: Andrew clearly belonged in rehab, not in prison; he needed to be given a good primer on life, perhaps an undergraduate course catalogue, and probably a hug. Putting a guy like this in prison for five years would be deeply destructive—both to him and to society. ●

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Divide and Conquer

How breaking up big high schools can be the key to successful education reform.

BY THOMAS TOCH

HIGH SCHOOLS DON'T PRODUCE A LOT of headlines in the national education debate. But they are arguably the weakest link in American education. International studies show that U.S. grade-school students perform reasonably well compared to their counterparts in developed countries in Europe and Asia. By junior high school, however, Americans fall behind their international peers, and plummet during the high school years. The gap is especially pronounced for kids who attend large high schools in urban areas with lots of students from low-income families.

A typical example of a sprawling inner-city school was the Julia Richman High School on Manhattan's Upper East Side. Though located in a high-rent neighborhood and once a prestigious school, by the early 1990s, Richman was one of the city's worst. Buffeted by a changing student population, sharp staffing cuts, and other forces, the enormous high school had degenerated into a cauldron of violence. Students tore out water fountains, destroyed bathrooms, and smashed windows, recalls John Broderick, the school's veteran engineer. Graffiti covered the hallways. Metal cages were constructed in the vice principal's office to separate belligerent students, and local cops labeled the school "Julia Riker's," after New York City's notorious Riker's Island jail. It was, says Broderick, "utter, utter chaos." The words of philosopher Francis Bacon inscribed over the building's front door, "Knowledge Is Power," seemed to be lost on everyone: The school's graduation rate was 37 percent.

Today, however, Julia Richman has, in Broderick's words, "turned around 500 percent." The disciplinary cages are gone, along with the metal detectors that fortified the school's entrances. Richman is bright, clean, and safe. Fights are rare. Attendance is up. Dropout rates are down substantially. And greater numbers of graduates are going on to college.

What produced this educational Reformation at a time when the nation is lamenting the plight of urban education? A big part of the answer can be found in the two-foot-by-three-foot banners that hang largely unnoticed along the school's main corridor: Urban Academy, Vanguard, Manhattan International, Talent Unlimited, P226M, Ella Baker—these are the names of the six separate schools that collectively share what is now known as the Julia Richman Education Complex. Richman has abandoned the American tradition of the "big high school" in favor of multiple scaled-down educational settings within the same building that engender a strong sense of community, where both students and teachers can flourish.

In recent years, there's been a movement among school reformers who argue that size is the enemy of excellence in America's high schools and breaking up super-sized schools into smaller units is the key to improving them. A decade's worth of studies comparing the merits of small high schools to large ones have revealed several clear trends: In small schools, student and teacher attendance rates are higher, disciplinary problems are fewer, graduation rates are higher, and dropout rates are lower.

But merely cleaving enormous schools into smaller units is rarely enough to counter the alienating environments that plague many traditional high schools.

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So New York City adopted a more radical—and more productive—strategy at Julia Richman. The city began by making a clean sweep of the old high school in the early 1990s, emptying the building of students and staff and then introducing six new schools of no more than 300 students, each with its own leadership. The Richman planners made each of the new institutions "schools of choice," allowing students from across the city to attend. And to help the schools forge unique educational missions that students, parents, and teachers could understand and commit to, they gave the schools a level of autonomy over teacher selection, budgets, and instructional strategies that's rare in public education.

Assembly Line Academies

What makes the Julia Richman experiment so important is that the basic blueprint of the nation's high schools hasn't changed significantly since the rise of the "comprehensive" high school nearly a century ago. At that time, high schools catered primarily to a narrow elite. But that changed in the early part of the 20th century when educators faced in influx of new students, many of them immigrants, who were thought to be ill-equipped to study academics. Leaders of the Progressive movement pushed to extend high school curricula beyond traditional academic subjects to include vocational and other nonacademic subjects that are still taught in today's schools.

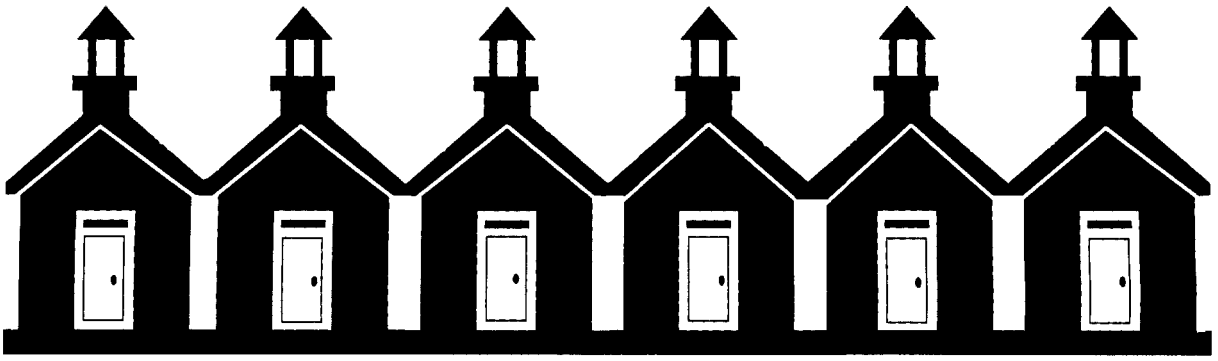
Julia Richman opened as a comprehensive girls' high school in the 1920s, a five-story, red-brick structure that stretches from 67th to 68th streets on Manhattan's Upper East Side. With classrooms for 2,200 students, two gymnasiums, a swimming pool, a theater, maple floors, and brass doorknobs inscribed with the words, "Public School, City of New York," the school was not only a model of the comprehensive high school, but a source of great civic pride. Its first students studied "commercial skills," such as typing and stenography. As Greek, Latin, and other advanced subjects later entered the school's curriculum, Julia Richman grew to become one of New York City's most prestigious secondary schools.

This comprehensive system made sense for the industrial economy of the time. Future lawyers, accountants, and other professionals studied academics, while those headed into mills and assembly lines learned valuable practical skills. High schools essentially served as great sorting machines, preparing students very differently for very different roles in the workforce. The system was considered to be both egalitarian and efficient, deliberately applying the industrial principles of mass production to American secondary education by housing everything under one roof.

But just as Richman fell on hard times, so too has the idea that the large, comprehensive high schools are the best way to educate students. In today's "knowledge-based" economy, preparing students for decent-paying jobs means educating all students well enough to enter college, not just an elite few. Of course, some large high schools do that job well, just as some small schools do it poorly. But today, 60 percent of American high school students attend schools of at least 1,000 students, which places them at a disadvantage. Large schools foster the sort of apathy once seen at Julia Richman, leading to what the educator Theodore Sizer once described as a "conspiracy of the least"—an unwritten, unspoken pledge among disaffected students and teachers to put as little energy as possible into their work that produces a huge drag on the productivity of American high schools. Julia Richman's dramatic turnaround offers lessons for large urban high schools plagued by similar problems.

"Hothousing" High Schools

The source of the Richman concept is Deborah Meier, the founder of Central Park East Secondary School, the small, nationally acclaimed high school in



Christina Larson

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East Harlem. Convinced that New York's vast comprehensive high schools were organizationally bankrupt, she and others from the Coalition of Essential Schools, a national school reform network, in 1992 sought the permission of the New York City Board of Education to restructure one of the city's worst high schools. The board granted the request and gave Meier and her colleagues Julia Richman, which had been on New York State's list of failing schools for more than a decade.

The rechristened "Julia Richman Education Complex" stopped taking new ninth graders after the 1992–93 school year, and by the summer of 1996, the last of the school's "old" students had graduated. Early on, Meier and her colleagues resolved not to found half a dozen new schools in Richman, reasoning that opening the educational complex with six schools in the throes of a start-up would likely be disastrous. Instead, several of the new high schools were "hothoused" in other locations around New York for a year, before they were imported, giving them time to work out the bugs in their school designs and establish distinct educational identities. As Herb Mack, co-director of Urban Academy and a Richman founder, puts it: "We wanted to make sure that the schools had a reason for being other than just being small." This also ensured that there would be no existing math, history, and other department heads to challenge the autonomy of the nascent schools—a problem for many high schools that merely subdivide in an effort to improve.

The first two schools to move in were Vanguard High School, which serves primarily low-achieving students, and Manhattan International, which serves recent immigrants who lack a strong grasp of English. At the same time, a performing-arts program within Julia Richman known as Talent Unlimited became an autonomous school within the new complex. Urban Academy Laboratory High School, a 120-student school for teenagers who have been unsuccessful in other city high schools, moved in shortly afterward.

Urban played a key role in helping to establish the fledgling schools at Richman. It had been a highly successful Manhattan school for a decade and was moved into Richman as part of the school's overhaul to serve as an "anchor" institution. Like Richman's other hothoused schools, Urban was able to bring its students to Richman under New York City's school choice program, which permits many students to select schools outside of their neighborhoods.

The results have been outstanding, to the pleasant surprise of parents, the city's education leaders, and many others. The dropout rate at Vanguard, the school with the most challenging students, is only 4 percent (compared to 20 percent citywide) and Manhattan International and Urban Academy report that more than 90 percent of their students attend college after graduation. (Test score comparisons are tough because until recently, Richman's high schools have been exempt from statewide testing; its own assessments, however, show real improvement.)

But remaking Julia Richman into an education "multiplex," one where the separate schools work together, was not simple. Indeed, if the creators of the Richman complex hadn't taken many steps along the way to preserve the independence of its individual schools without sacrificing the governability of the vast building, Richman wouldn't be the success it is today.

Urban's stature helped Richman's new high schools survive a troubled two-year coexistence with the students and teachers they were replacing. The transition generated friction between the school's old and new staffs and hurt those students whose school was being phased out. "The 700–800 exiting kids were demoralized and largely abandoned," says Ann Cook, who runs Urban Academy with Mack and who helped create the Richman complex. "The existing staff were angry and suspicious. 'Now you are fixing the place,' they would say when they saw workers doing renovations. It was horrible." Urban's leaders helped to diffuse the hostility. But they concluded that it would have been better to move the new schools into the building only after it had been vacated completely.

Once the new schools arrived at the Richman complex, Mack, Cook, and their colleagues went to great lengths to preserve the schools' autonomy, believing that creating a strong sense of community within each of the new schools was the best way to forge the close, respectful relationships between students and teachers that motivate students to care about their school work.

Students had to apply to each school in the complex separately. The majority attended schools by choice—as a result of the city's choice plan—and were thus, Meier and the others reasoned, more likely to identify with their school and work harder, even, as would prove to be the case, if many students arrived with weak academic records.

Richman schools are also physically distinct. Though as many as three share some floors, there are no common hallways, and the swinging double doors that connect the schools might as well be cinderblock walls; students and teachers simply don't go into other schools' space—a fact that has required a lot of

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instructional gerrymandering, including moving a chemistry lab to Manhattan International's wing of the building so that its students didn't have to enter Vanguard's area to go to class.

Even bathrooms, a source of discipline problem in many high schools, are part of the solution at Richman. To ensure that there aren't any public spaces where students and teachers aren't known to each other, every bathroom in the building is located within the boundaries of schools and is off-limits to students from other schools—conditions that require students and teachers at Urban to share bathrooms. There are six schools in six different locations on six different schedules at Richman, all of which share (at different times) a recital hall, art gallery, gym, pool, weight room, pottery and dance studios, cafeteria, library, an auditorium, a small theater, and a student health clinic run by nearby Mt. Sinai Hospital. The only places they are permitted to intermingle are the cafeteria and the library.

A Stake in Success

In carving out distinct boundaries within the building and giving the schools authority over their staffing, budgets, and teaching strategies, Richman's organizers sought to give teachers a significant stake in their students' success. "You need autonomy for teachers for them to feel truly responsible for kids," says Cook. "If teachers don't feel responsible, they don't invest themselves."

Richman's tightly knit schools, meanwhile, have engendered a sense of belonging among their students that is rare in large urban high schools. In the words of Urban Academy's Mack, a 40-year veteran of the Chicago and New York school systems, Richman's schools "give kids a home." Urban's atmosphere is best described as relaxed; there's little trace of the coldness and sense of unease that pervade many traditional urban high schools. During class breaks, Urban students hang out in groups in stuffed chairs and old sofas in the hallway of the school's second-floor "campus." As I sat speaking with faculty members during a recent visit, several students dropped by to ask them questions. They sought out teachers with no less casualness in Urban's faculty office, a large, open space with desks pushed up against each other, as in a newsroom.

"How many teachers did you know well at Midwood?" I asked Aneliese Ranzoni, a senior at Urban who had transferred from Midwood High School in Brooklyn, where there were 3,700 students.

"Know well?"

"Well."

"None."

"How about here?"

"All the ones I have, and also the ones I don't have."

The result, says Rona Armillas, a former assistant principal at Manhattan International, is "a different type of negotiation" between students and teachers in the Richman complex. "In most high schools you approach kids as an authority figure," Armillas says. "It's a power play. And it usually doesn't work. There's no growth in students' maturity. At Richman, you know the kid and his style and there's mutual respect. Things don't escalate." As Urban science teacher Terri Grosso puts it, "It's not us versus them here."

Security takes on a very different meaning in such an atmosphere. Rather than a system that treats students anonymously and resorts to metal detectors and surveillance cameras, Richman's schools have become largely self-policing. Because of their small size and the building's policy of having students stay out of other schools' space, students and teachers know who belongs in their part of the building and who doesn't, and that becomes Richman's most important source of security. Students are just as likely as teachers to ask "outsiders" for identification or to report them to Richman's half dozen security guards.

Richman isn't completely free of disciple problems, but serious infractions like fighting, say students such as Josme Mark, a senior from Haiti via Brooklyn, are very rare. That's certainly the sense one gets at the complex's front entrance, where a mild-mannered guard with a smile and a sign-in sheet has replaced metal detectors.

It's hard to overstate the care with which Richman's leaders have tended to the building's social equilibrium. To discourage interschool rivalries even as they promote schools' autonomy, for example, they have sought to blend students from the sundry Richman schools in carefully chosen settings. In addition to stu-

Large schools foster an apathy that could be described as a "conspiracy of the least"—an unwritten, unspoken pledge among disaffected students and teachers to put as little energy as possible into their work.

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dent councils in each school, there's a building-wide student government. There are building-wide college fairs. Students represent Richman rather than their individual schools in New York City's Public School Athletic League. And Richman's athletic director has begun commingling students from the different high schools on intramural basketball teams.

Yet a recent event reveals both the value of the schools' autonomy and the fragile nature of the social fabric in urban high schools. Mack had given the Richman basketball teams each a classroom in Urban for pre-practice study halls. Urban students are so trusting of one another that they routinely leave expensive jackets lying around in the student lounge. But as soon as the building-wide basketball teams started coming into Urban, the clothing began to disappear. The basketball players brought friends from other Richman schools with them to the Urban study halls who simply didn't share the same sense of community as Urban's students. When Mack subsequently moved the study halls to the Richman theater, the theft subsided.

Traffic Patterns

To protect the independence of the new Richman schools, Meier and the others resolved that the complex wouldn't have a principal, only a "building manager"—Urban co-director Herb Mack.

Watching the veteran educator work the building, it is easy to think he's a traditional principal. When I caught up with him at 7:15 one morning, he was speeding through Richman checking that its many doors were locked, a knot of keys bouncing up and down on his hip. He greeted the guards at the building's two student entrances, then bolted outside with a sheaf of reserved-for-staff flyers that he placed under the windshield wipers of cars parked on the school's block that didn't display school system parking permits. Back in the building he noticed that the day's newspapers weren't at the front entrance. "They've been taken again, we've got to find out who's doing it," he declared, striding toward a security guard to report the matter. By 7:45, he was welcoming students.

But by 8:15, Mack had changed roles. He was back at his desk in Urban Academy, talking as the school's co-director to a student about a course she needed to complete her semester's schedule. And shortly afterward, he headed down the hall to the first of the three social studies courses he teaches at Urban.

Mack's role also differs from that of traditional principals in other ways. He has no authority over the budgets, staffing, or instruction at Richman's various schools, other than at Urban. Rather, school-wide policies are formed by a "building council" that consists of the directors of Richman's schools and the heads of other programs housed in the building: First Steps, a child-care center; the health clinic; and a teacher training center. The council convenes once a week to discuss everything from fire drills to food quality. It also gathers several times a year at the home of the director of one of Richman's schools for breakfast or lunch and a half-day's discussion. Mack leads the meetings, but he doesn't dictate their outcomes.

Early on, the council, then representing Richman's four high schools, decided to bring in an elementary program (the 300-student pre-K-through-eighth-grade Ella Baker Elementary School) and another for disabled students (P226M, serving several dozen autistic students) as a way of further tempering the adolescent environment in Richman.

The strategy has paid substantial dividends: Older students are more careful about what they say and do when younger children are present, and the presence of Ella Baker and P226M within the complex give the high school students ample opportunities to be tutors and teachers' aides, responsible roles they are encouraged to play. The bank of monitors that security guards at the old Richman watched 24 hours a day in a windowless second-floor office has been boxed off with plywood in what is now an Ella Baker counseling office.

The council reshaped Vanguard's boundaries when it realized that its original "traffic" plan had required Talent Unlimited students to go through Vanguard on their way to and from Richman's cafeteria. The result: The hallway between Talent Unlimited and the cafeteria was turned into "public" space, housing the complex's pottery and dance studios, home economics center, and distance-learning laboratory, which the building council constructed with city council funding.

And because many high school students in the building are parents, the council used school-system funding to turn Richman's old guidance suites into the First Steps infant-toddler child-care center, complete with an observation room and a one-way mirror for students in the building's child-development classes.

When I was at Richman, the building's guards were troubled by the substantial number of delivery people wandering the building. They expressed their unhappiness to the council's security subcommittee and by the next morning the council had taken action. "Delivery of food to staff and students has been a headache," Mack declared in a memo to the building's staff and

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students. As a result, he announced, "Any deliveries that arrive without the recipient's name and room number written on the back of the package will be sent back to the restaurant." Within a week the problem was solved.

But unless the welfare of Richman as a whole is at stake, the council lets schools set policies individually. When the New York City Police Department sought to ban "do rag" headwear in the city's schools to discourage gangs, the four Richman schools responded independently. Manhattan International, Vanguard, and Talent Unlimited went along with the police request. But Urban, after a student-faculty meeting where do rags were adjudged to have no gang overtones at the school, resolved to continue to let its students wear them. Richman's other three high schools respected Urban's stance.

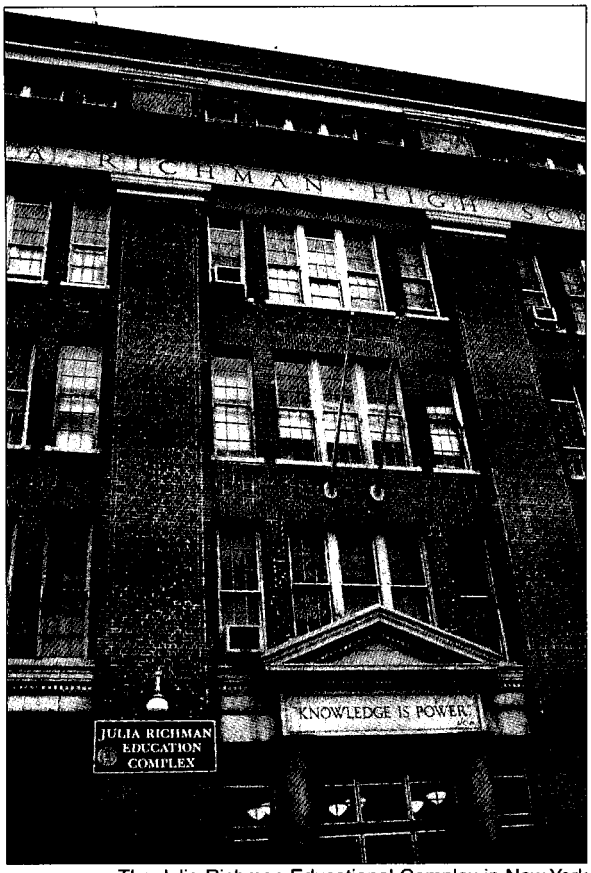

Photo courtesy of the Center for Inquiry

The Julia Richman Educational Complex in New York

Small Schools, Big Benefits

Despite common conception about the greater cost of small schools, the Richman multiplex hasn't been expensive to operate. Skeptics frequently contend that small schools must be less efficient than big ones because they can't spread costs over as many students. But in many instances the Richman complex has been more efficient than the large school it replaced. Julia Richman High School, for example, needed six extra security guards just to operate its metal detectors. Richman's council has streamlined building-wide staffing. Schools now require fewer counselors because teachers and administrators know students so well. And because Richman's schools are small, and thus more manageable, Mack and other administrators have time to teach. This has permitted the schools to focus more of their resources on their classrooms. Eighty-seven percent of the staff in Richman's high schools teach students, for example, compared to 81 percent in New York City's high schools generally.

The cost savings of these steps have been documented by Norm Fruchter and his colleagues at New York University's Graduate School of Education, who recently examined the finances of large and small high schools nationwide and found that the efficiencies of large high schools are largely offset by fewer non-teaching staff and other savings in small schools. They concluded that small schools are only about 5 percent more expensive than large ones. And when the researchers crunched the numbers from a different perspective—the cost per graduate—the efficiency debate tilted in favor of small schools. Because dropout rates are higher in large high schools, Fruchter found, the cost of educating each graduate averaged $49,578, compared to $49,554 in small high schools, where more students stay through graduation.

Richman's schools also pool their resources. Several have sought to concentrate their course offerings out of a desire to teach fewer subjects in greater depth. Doing so has allowed Richman's schools to hire shared staff in art, dance, and other subjects they would be unable to teach with the enrollment-based funding they receive from the New York City school system.

But Richman would not be nearly as efficiently or effectively as it is without a large measure of autonomy from New York City's school headquarters—autonomy that the complex's founders had to work long and hard to win, given the intensely bureaucratic and hierarchical nature of New York's public school system. And even with substantial independence, the council has had to get the bureaucracy's blessing before moving on several matters. The city's superintendent of alternative schools, for example, only let the Richman council remove the building's metal detectors and surveillance cameras once it had demonstrated that

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parents backed the idea. Nor would Richman be the place it is today if Meier and her colleagues hadn't won the support of the 140,000-member United Federation of Teachers (UFT), the city's influential teachers union.

The UFT, like many teachers' unions, has the power to effectively veto school closings under job-security provisos in its contract. Thus, Meier sought the support of Sandra Feldman, the UFT president, pointing out that working conditions in the old Richman were terrible, and the multiplex was a good solution. Feldman agreed, and the UFT arranged early retirement packages and transfers to other schools for departing Richman staff.

Just as important was a revolutionary pact between the UFT and the New York City school board that offered the city's schools autonomy—rare in public education—over staffing, schedules, and other key aspects of school life. Under the so-called School Based Options agreement, schools with at least 70 percent of teachers backing the concept are able to abandon seniority-based staffing and other union-negotiated strictures. As a result, Richman schools can hire teachers who share their educational philosophies, which greatly strengthens the schools' sense of community.

Of course, replacing the nation's many dysfunctional large urban high schools with smaller, more personal educational settings doesn't guarantee students a high-quality education. Strong teaching is also a key. So Richman's new schools have sought to take advantage of their size to introduce instructional innovations that wouldn't be possible in many large schools. Urban, Vanguard, and Manhattan International, for example, use a student-evaluation system that requires every student to make oral defenses of science, social studies, math, and several other projects that they must complete in addition to their regular courses to graduate.

Bumping the Bureaucracy

Successfully reforming any school requires battling the bureaucracy, and Richman is no different. Despite its successes, the school is under tremendous pressure to conform to the priorities of the New York City school system in ways that threaten its stability.

The week I visited, the city's education bureaucracy assigned a new guidance counselor, "bumping" Manhattan International's existing counselor out of a job during the height of the college-admissions season. The counselor claimed the job under a clause in the UFT's collective-bargaining contract that permits teachers in schools with declining enrollments to take the jobs of less-experienced teachers in other schools. "I'm the principal and I have no say," Ling objected at the time. But he protested to the city's school authorities and the carpetbagger counselor was sent elsewhere. The year before, a city school administrator sent a patronage hire to be Richman's technology specialist, despite the individual's having scant technology experience. The building council turned down the funding for the job rather than take the person.

And in response to charges by the city's large, traditional high schools that Richman's schools are underpopulated, authorities repeatedly have sought to put more students in Richman's high schools. "There's always pull toward the center, toward bureaucratic control," says Mack. "What we do is not really understandable to a bureaucracy."

Recently a group of parents sought to dismantle the Richman complex completely. In a confrontation where race and class were never far from the surface of the debate, the mostly white and affluent parents of students at a nearby elementary school pressed local politicians to have Richman turned into a single, "zoned" high school available only to Upper East Side students, a move that would have excluded from Richman the many students who now travel to the complex from Harlem, Manhattan's Lower East Side, and the Bronx. The school fought back, led by Ann Cook, who, as Richman's Project Director, expends as much energy on behalf of Richman outside the complex as Mack does inside.

Cook sought the help of Richman's "board of advisors," a panel of influential lawyers, corporate executives, foundation officers, civil rights leaders, labor unionists, and university professors the council had assembled years earlier to help navigate New York's political waters. "Like most bureaucracies, the New York board of education responds to outside pressure, not to middle management," says Cook. Together, they successfully worked the city's educational and political leaders. The parent group was "given" a building nearby.

Ultimately, Richman's leaders don't take much of anything for granted when it comes to preserving the Richman complex. At the start of every school year Mack gathers the new teachers from throughout the complex to explain Richman and how it works. "You have to keep building culture," he says. "It's not automatic."

But to engineer Broderick the results speak for themselves. "After 42 years in the business," he says of the transformation at Richman, "it's the first time I've ever had to ask teachers to leave their rooms at the end of the day so I can clean." ●

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Charging Ahead

America's biggest new export—credit cards—could bring down the world economy.

BY JOSHUA KURLANTZICK

FOR MOST OF THE LAST TWO GENERATIONS, the global economic system operated under a paradoxical division of labor. Americans consumed, while Asians—and much of the rest of the world—saved. The vast American consumer market helped drive the whole world economy. But since Americans were spending at such a prodigious clip, they weren't able to save much. That created two problems: There wasn't a lot of capital for business investment and even less to make up for the country's huge current account deficit—a function of our buying more from foreigners than we sell them. That's where the saving of the rest of the world came in. Foreigners saved so much that they had plenty of capital to invest—and where better to invest it than in the galloping, consumer-driven American economy?

Foreign investors, banks, and other companies purchased American equities, treasuries, and greenbacks, and invested in the United States (According to a recent Merrill Lynch report, the United States absorbed nearly three-quarters of the savings of the world's major industrial countries in 2002.) This inflow of foreign capital has kept America's current account deficit stable and U.S. inflation low, making it easier for American consumers to keep on buying. Asians, meanwhile, needed our consumption-driven economy because their export-driven economies thrived on Americans who spent every dollar they earned, and then some. This division of labor may have been morally dysfunctional. But as a global economic order, it worked like a charm.

Of course, economists long warned that the system was inherently unstable. If foreigners suddenly lost faith in the U.S. economy and pulled out their billions, the market would bid the value of the dollar down dramatically. Indeed, since the stock market bubble burst in 2000 that's already begun to happen. In the last two years, foreign investment in the U.S. economy has plummeted to levels last seen in the early 1990s. With America at war against terrorism, anxious economists now worry that rising anti-Americanism or just the war-induced strains on the American economy could prolong the foreign investment drought or dry it up even more, leading to a sharp devaluation of the dollar, and perhaps even a cycle of worldwide recession.

There's no way to predict if any of this will come to pass. But the crux of the problem is that these possibilities remain outside America's control. The only way to truly solve the problem is for Americans to save more at home or sell more goods and services overseas. Ironically, though, what may bring the whole system crashing down once and for all is one of America's own most rapidly growing exports: credit cards.

Sticky Rice, Stickier Debt

Until the mid-1990s, consumers outside North America and Western Europe rarely ran up large amounts of personal debt. With the credit card market in the developed world still growing, big credit card companies did not focus on the developing world (which includes most of Asia). Countries like Thailand still hadn't developed large populations of middle class consumers. But traditional mores also played a role. In Asia, where people historically considered saving an important virtue and conducted nearly all transactions in cash, personal debt was less a fact of life than a source of shame. As recently as the mid-1990s, South Koreans saved more than 30 per-

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cent of their GDP, while Americans struggled to save a measly 1 percent (though U.S. home values and ownership rates, a form of savings, did rise).

For a variety of reasons, however, the situation has recently begun to change. As some developing countries boomed during the 1990s, they germinated millions of new middle- and upper-class consumers who had more capital and more desire to purchase consumer goods and their own homes. Many of these new consumers were under 40—men and women less tied to traditional mores of saving. Many had traveled in North America and seen how Americans easily obtain loans, sign mortgages, and whip out credit cards. After the Asian financial crisis of 1997, which depleted much of the savings of this new middle class, credit was often the only way to keep buying.

At the same time, the late-1990s financial crises prompted Asian, Latin American, and Eastern European governments to try to stimulate domestic consumption to boost national growth rates. Two key ways to do that were to lower rates of interest and ease the regulation of credit. Over the last three years in Thailand, Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra has toured the country to encourage Thais to spend more. In South Korea, the government has called on Koreans to borrow as much as possible. In China, the state has gone so far as to create whole new national holidays to give citizens more time to shop.

Meanwhile, intensive lobbying by banks, finance companies, and credit card firms has prompted governments to lower the minimum-income bar for credit cards and other consumer loans. For the lenders, the motivation was obvious. Credit-card operations can generate returns of more than 50 percent, since card issuers often charge interest rates of more than 20 percent. As Noam Neusner noted in *U.S. News and World Report*, "for banks, personal, unsecured loans—[i.e. issuing credit cards or personal loans to people who are a high risk not to pay their balance] represent one of the most profitable niches." And as markets in the developed world became saturated, debt issuers turned to the developing world to keep their profits rolling in.

This crucial deregulation has allowed banks and card companies to pursue a wider range of clients, many of whom have minimal savings and no credit history. In South Korea, for example, it has become so easy for lenders to issue credit cards that the local media reported last year that banks had mistakenly given household pets—which could hardly have a credit rating—their own credit cards. In golf-mad Thailand, card issuers have offered free links lessons. And credit-card issuers have pursued similar tactics across Latin America and Eastern Europe.

Foreign governments and global lenders have both tried to encourage developing world consumers to open their wallets and global consumers have happily obliged. Until recently, credit cards were unheard of in China. Today, however, Chinese use plastic for more than $200 billion worth of transactions annually. India and Indonesia reported major increases in mortgage applications, consumer loans, and credit card purchases in 2002. Across Asia, Visa International increased the number of cards issued by 25 percent last year alone, and cash withdrawals using Visas rose by 44 percent. According to *The Economist*, households now account for nearly 40 percent of East Asian banks' total lending, up from 27 percent in 1997.

Thailand and South Korea have become even more obvious examples of American-style spending. Visa says that total spending on its cards in Thailand is rising by more than 40 percent annually. In South Korea the story is the same. As one South Korean told *The New York Times* in December, the average Korean worker now carries four credit cards (more than 10 million South Koreans carry four or more, while the average bank worker carries between 10 and 15). Meanwhile, consumers in Eastern Europe, Latin America, and even Africa have actively followed suit. Schroder Salomon Smith Barney, an investment bank, estimates that between 1997 and 2001, household lending in Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic rose by more than 25 percent. As *The New York Times* recently reported, Russians also are beginning to utilize debt to pay for mortgages and large appliances. Household spending in South Africa, the biggest economy in Africa, has soared since 2000. And while Latin America has been hit by a series of financial crises from which, unlike Asia, it has not completely recovered, consumer spending—especially spending on credit—is rising there as well, in the region's more developed economies.

Extra Credit

As in the United States, the expansion of household spending in the developing world has had many positive impacts. It has not only helped buoy domestic economies hit hard by the economic shocks of the late 1990s but also provided new markets for foreign companies. Chinese acceptance of credit and auto financing, for instance, has helped Volkswagen make China its largest market; other automakers plan to follow suit. "The Chinese are becoming more used to financing. Once we establish the type of comprehensive GM financing systems we have in the U.S., we expect to see a huge jump in purchases," General Motors China head Philip Murtaugh told me last fall in Shanghai. Leading automakers are also developing

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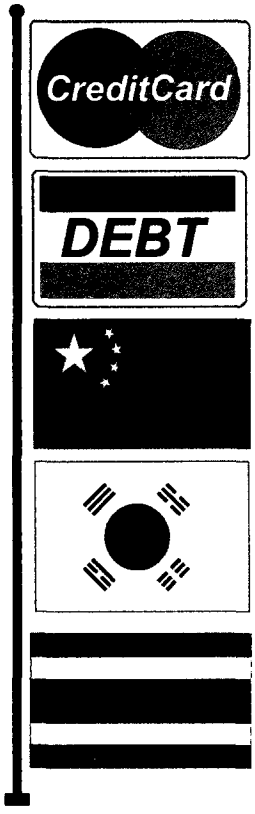
plans to expand their product lines in Mexico, Brazil, South Africa, and Chile, in part because of the explosion of borrowing on credit—a development which mirrors the pattern in America during the early 20th century. Rising consumer spending has also filled many countries' tax coffers, since in most developing countries sales taxes are much easier to collect than income taxes—income-tax avoidance is very high.

Yet the hard truth is that no one really knows what the impact of this consumer spending will be. These benefits could be outweighed by the potentially destructive impact of unleashing easy credit and American-style personal spending in developing nations with nascent systems of credit checks, unsustainable trade imbalances, and weak and opaque banking systems. In the United States, though financial companies have more leeway to lend to lower-income consumers than they used to, they are still subject to a range of state and federal regulations. Banks, credit card issuers, and other consumer lenders can also utilize America's well-developed system of credit checks to discover which potential customers are bad credit risks. Consequently, U.S. lenders generally are able to avoid lending or offering credit cards to high-risk clients.



Christina Larson

Most developing countries lack the regulations and credit-checking services to deal with their rising numbers of consumer loans, credit cards, and mortgages. In Mexico, for instance, few banks require card recipients to show any credit history, minimum income, or even knowledge of how to use a card. As one Mexico City taxi driver told *The Financial Times*, "There's always someone offering me free credit." In Hong Kong, the lack of regulations has allowed credit card companies to aggressively target university students, helping the students obtain a credit card in minutes with nothing more than a photo identification. (Last May, Hong Kong's Consumer Council, a research and advocacy organization, chastised the government for allowing banks and other card issuers to use misleading tactics in their campaigns for students.)

Widespread corrupt practices, meanwhile, have led merchants in other countries to shun plastic altogether. When I traveled to Argentina in the winter of 2001-2002, I often found it difficult to convince retailers to take my American Express, the supposed gold standard of credit cards. Retailers had become so used to seeing fraudulent cards and other forms of questionable scrip issued by Buenos Aires banks and even provincial officials that they no longer trusted anything but cash. Meanwhile, the national government was taking virtually no steps to investigate any of the cards. Most merchants simply adopted a policy summed up by a sign in one café: "Se Acepta Dolares."

As a result of so much fraud and so much easy credit, many lenders in the developing world have found themselves overwhelmed with bad consumer loans and huge numbers of personal bankruptcies. To take just one example, 2.5 million South Koreans have fallen into arrears on their credit-card payments, in a nation of only 48 million people. In February, South Korean banks estimated that nearly 8 percent of credit card bills in the country were outstanding for a month or more, roughly double the percentage in the United States, and last year South Korea suffered its largest number of personal bankruptcies ever. According to banking industry statistics, personal bankruptcies are also rising in China, Mexico, Argentina, Chile, Brazil, and Thailand. In Hong Kong, personal bankruptcies are soaring by more than 100 percent per year. Even small, isolated countries like Bolivia have been affected by the rolling wave of easy credit and bankruptcy.

The rising tide of personal bankruptcies not only bears a social cost of broken families, domestic violence, and suicides, it also cuts into global lenders' ability to finance business loans. This isn't the case in the United States, because our capital base is vastly larger and deeper. But in Asian countries with smaller capital bases the problem is immediate and acute. In South Korea, several large banks, including Kookmin, the country's largest lender, have seen their net losses rise over the past four quarters—Kookmin lost $173 million in the fourth quarter of 2002 alone—because of what analysts told *The Financial Times* was a pattern of "reckless lending to consumers [without] properly assessing the creditworthiness of consumers." As a result, Kookmin and several other large South Korean banks have had to increase their cash reserves to cover non-performing consumer

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loans; in so doing, they have sharply reduced their loans to businesses. In fact, this spring South Korea's credit card companies and banks have had to issue more than $1 billion in new shares in an effort to address a looming cash crunch, a move which has rattled South Korea's stock markets. A similar pattern has been observed in other countries in Asia, Latin America, and even Russia. Even major financial players can be affected. Last year, HSBC had to drastically increase its provisions for potential defaults, in part because of personal bankruptcies in Hong Kong, which thereby reduced the amount of capital HSBC had to lend.

Drawing funds away from business investment can be a serious drag on economic growth. Banks reduce their capital bases, interest rates are forced up, capital becomes harder for businesses to raise, and companies slip into bankruptcy. Indeed, corporate bankruptcies in South Korea, Hong Kong, Thailand, and elsewhere in Asia have risen over the past two years, as many businesses have been unable to find new sources of financing from banks weighed down by portfolios heavy with non-performing loans. The decline in investment is often compounded by the binge-and-purge effects of high consumer debt, in which consumers run up huge credit card bills and then spend virtually nothing for months. This cycle can make it hard for retailers to make long-term business plans.

Prominent economists have begun to realize the potential dangers excessive consumer lending poses to the developing world. Last fall, the International Monetary Fund's chief representative in Seoul, Paul Gruenwald, expressed serious concern that South Korea's economy could be undermined by the "booming" number of bad loans to households and high credit card delinquency rates. Gruenwald has advised the South Korean government to take measures to reduce Koreans' consumer spending binge, and the IMF has since issued several other warnings about excessive, unregulated consumer lending in the developing world. Taking the advice, the South Korean government recently has announced government measures designed to bail out cash-short Korean credit card companies and restore banks' liquidity. Kim Gwang-Lim, South Korea's vice minister of finance, warned that if such a bailout does not succeed, "the potential impact from credit card companies' problems on the financial markets will be significant. Such problems could trigger chaos ... and a possible collapse of the entire financial system."

Thanks to easy credit and widespread fraud, many lenders in the developing world have found themselves overwhelmed with bad consumer loans and huge numbers of personal bankruptcies.

Unsustainable Development

As 1997's Asian financial crisis demonstrated, crises in one developing nation's economy can rapidly spread to others, sparking a wave of destabilization throughout the world economy. Indeed, many of the countries experiencing rapid run-ups of consumer credit are those which went through snaps of boom and bust in the middle 1990s. Beside the growth of easy personal credit in Asia, economic weakness in Mexico—another country where minimal regulations on consumer loans have led banks to lend recklessly—could ripple throughout Latin America, of which Mexico's is the second-largest economy.

For decades America has relied upon the rest of the world to finance its consumption. But rising amounts of personal debt in foreign countries, combined with a dimming view of the American economy, could put a damper on this trend. As foreign banks and other lending institutions—which do not enjoy the American luxury of being able to sustain their problems by tapping into pools of foreign investments—slash their capital base due to consumer debt, they may reduce their holdings in the United States. Of course, foreign institutions are not going to just stop investing in America, but even marginal reductions in their investments could have a serious impact on the American economy. Indeed, the pullout has already begun. Foreign direct investment into the United States fell from $301 billion in 2000 to $124 billion in 2001, the most recent year for which comprehensive data are available. And foreign investors have slashed their net purchases of U.S. treasuries, greenbacks, and corporate bonds over the past year—corporate bond purchases fell by a whopping 60 percent in September 2002 from a year before.

If foreign money continues pulling out of the United States, leading economists warn, America's debt and current-account deficits might no longer be sustainable, leading to a dollar crash and deep damage to the American economy. "At some point, probably relatively soon, as foreigners pull out their capital, the current-account deficit just won't be able to be maintained anymore,"

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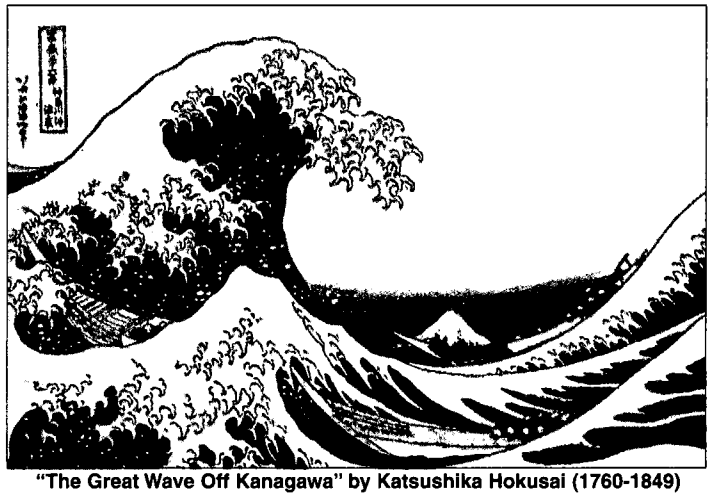
says Robert E. Scott, head of research at the Economic Policy Institute, a leading liberal D.C. think-tank. In a comprehensive research report, Scott's EPI colleagues conclude that the current-account deficit will soon become unsustainable, the dollar will begin to weaken, and the United States will be forced to address this imbalance in trade by moving away from the strong dollar policy which has been a hallmark of both the Clinton and Bush administrations and allowing the dollar to weaken, thereby accepting a deflation in Americans' real incomes. The EPI economists conclude that bringing the current account deficit into balance would require a 10-percent drop in America's GDP. And EPI is hardly the only organization making these claims. Last fall, Stephen Roach, chief economist at Morgan Stanley and one of the most thoughtful long-term predictors of the world economy, warned clients in a research note that "America's ever-widening current account deficit is on an inherently unstable path."



"The Great Wave Off Kanagawa" by Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849)

A long-term slowdown of economic growth in the United States could have pervasive effects around the globe. First, American consumer consumption would almost certainly slacken, as Americans began to save more to pay off higher domestic financing. That drop in consumer spending might then further depress global economic growth. Without the uber-consumer nation running at full speed, years might go by before the world economy escaped the cycle of weak consumption and slow growth. Despite increased consumer spending throughout the developing world, Asian countries like Thailand, Malaysia, and South Korea still depend on exports for as much as 50 percent of their gross domestic product. For these states, as well as for most developing countries in Latin America, the United States is by far the largest market. Similarly, China has built up the largest trade deficit with the United States of any country in the world. A falling dollar, which would make exporting to the United States less profitable, would only compound foreign companies' problems.

Cutting Cards

The consumer-credit problem has not yet developed into a full-blown crisis. Most Asian, Latin American, and European nations have not yet reached American levels of consumer indebtedness and low savings rates. Foreign banks and other lending institutions still possess pools of liquid capital to invest in the United States, keeping America's current account deficit afloat.

There is still time for governments, international financial institutions, credit card companies, banks, and other lenders to work together to prevent a global consumer debt crisis. But, in order to give the developing world the benefits of the consumer credit revolution America has enjoyed and protect developing nations from the potentially destructive impact of unleashing easy credit, countries, banks, and credit card issuers around the globe need to be subjected to stricter rules on lending. In short, they need the type of laws we have here in the United States. Nations could impose age limits and minimum income standards for applying for credit cards—a policy Singapore, among some other countries, has already adopted. They could also force credit card companies to charge reasonable interest rates and to use transparent advertising. The United States and other developed countries could work with developing countries to implement internationally recognized credit-evaluation procedures and crack down on banks that continue offering easy credit while defaults and delinquencies soar.

Unfortunately, such changes don't appear likely. Neither the United States nor the European Union has shown much willingness to police credit card companies and other lending institutions, let alone teach developing nations to police consumer-lending markets in their own countries. The world's financial media have largely ignored the consumer debt problem as they have focused primarily on the admittedly sexier topic of corporate fraud and bankruptcy. Meanwhile, consumers in the developing world just keep charging and charging and charging ... ●

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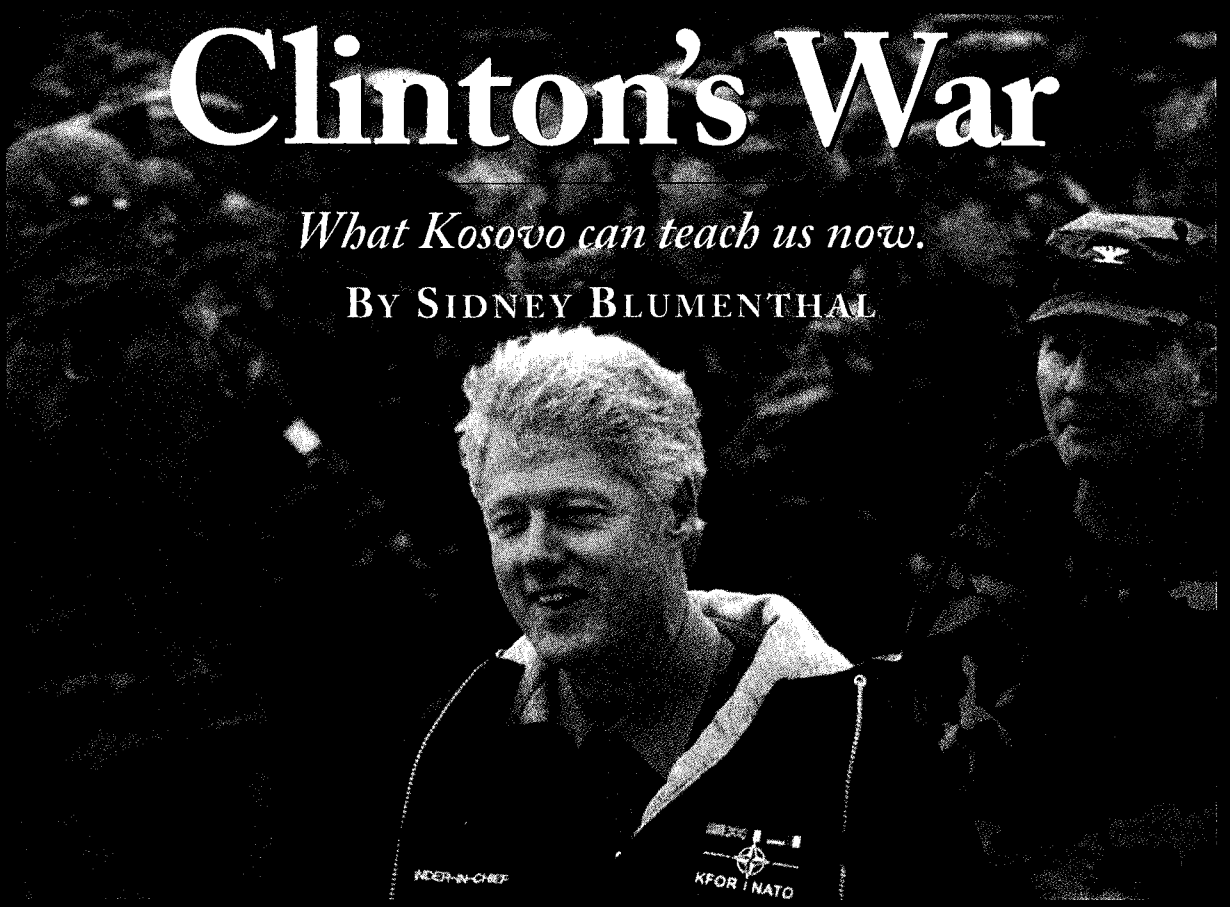
Clinton's War

What Kosovo can teach us now.

BY SIDNEY BLUMENTHAL



In the spring of 1999, President Bill Clinton launched a war to reverse Serbian dictator Slobodan Milosevic's "ethnic cleansing" of Albanians from the province of Kosovo.

There are some striking similarities between Clinton's Kosovo campaign and George W. Bush's invasion of Iraq four years later. Both were wars of choice, waged against tyrannical regimes that did not immediately threaten the United States. Both wars provoked strong public opposition in Europe and elsewhere and criticism that insufficient ground forces were being brought to bear against the enemy. Both wars ended with sudden U.S. victories. And both defined the national security visions of their respective administrations.

Yet it is the differences between those wars and how the diplomacy surrounding them was conducted that is most striking. In the case of Iraq, the Bush administration ignored NATO; belatedly demanded, briefly gained, and ultimately lost the support of the United Nations; and went to war over the expressed opposition of much of the world. Bush's war has divided the United States from Europe, split Europe itself, and left the future of the United Nations and NATO in doubt. In Kosovo, by contrast, the Clinton administration worked through NATO, keeping its shaky coalition together in the Western alliance's first war. Clinton's war brought Europe and America closer together and invested NATO and trans-Atlantic relations with a renewed sense of purpose. That unity of purpose proved invaluable in post-war Kosovo, where U.S. and European troops secured the peace and U.N. administrators sponsored a difficult, but so far reasonably successful, transition to democracy. How helpful—or welcome—our allies will be in rebuilding post-war Iraq remains to be seen.

Sidney Blumenthal, who served as assistant and senior adviser to President Clinton in his second term, was a participant in the Kosovo War events in the White House and a liaison to several European leaders, including British Prime Minister Tony Blair. In his forthcoming memoir, *The Clinton Wars*, Blumenthal recounts the 78 days of the Kosovo campaign, adding important new details to the story of that victory: how Clinton combined the use of force with diplomacy in a delicate balancing act; his true view on the deployment of ground troops; how Germany became part of the "coalition of the willing"; and Clinton's strategic commitment to the U.S.-European alliance.—*The Editors*

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In mid-February 1999, one day after his trial in the United States Senate ended, President Bill Clinton delivered his weekly Saturday radio address. The subject was Kosovo, and his attention on this particular Saturday to an obscure corner of Europe, a rebellious province of Serbia, seemed almost like a return to tranquility after the tumult of the impeachment drama.

But the latest turn in the Balkan wars that had plagued the West for a decade was about to confront Clinton with the gravest foreign policy crisis of his presidency and the first war fought by NATO forces in its 50-year history. Like Joseph Stalin, Slobodan Milosevic—the president of Serbia—was a mediocrity with the soul of a mass murderer: the man without qualities as tyrant. Like Stalin, he manipulated nationalism to promote his atavistic power. He was ruthless in his corruption, which was a family enterprise, in his brutality, and in pitting his enemies against each other. In 1989, as communist regimes began to crumble across Eastern Europe, Milosevic, a former party apparatchik, had harnessed the power of ethnic grievance to launch his new career as a Serbian nationalist leader. During the early 1990s, Milosevic and his military had waged a bloody irredentist war across the former Yugoslavia, one aimed at the "ethnic cleansing" of Bosnian territory that the Serbs deemed their own. It ended only during the summer of 1995, when NATO bombs forced Serbia to the negotiating table at Dayton, Ohio, ending the war in Bosnia.

By the late 1990s, however, Milosevic had launched a new campaign in Kosovo, considered by Serbs to be the cradle of their civilization and culture. In 1998, Milosevic promulgated a virtual law of apartheid against Kosovo's overwhelmingly Albanian population, denying them employment, health care, and rights—the first step in a plan to drive them from their land and occupy it solely with Serbs. That January, the Serb army staged a massacre, precipitating U.S. involvement in trying to work out a peace agreement. While the negotiations proceeded, Milosevic massed 40,000 troops, 300 tanks, and 1,000 pieces of artillery at the Kosovo border. His campaign had already created 250,000 refugees.

The Kosovo crisis, as dismal and obscure as it must have seemed to many Americans, threatened to discredit the leadership of every government in Western Europe, set Russia against the United States, and undermine Clinton just as he was freed from the constitutional crisis at home. The Kosovo war would require all of the president's deft political skills to sustain a strained international coalition. His entire foreign policy rested on his ability to carry out a campaign that faced intense opposition from both right and left, from his familiar enemies in the Republican Congress and a rising chorus of discontent about his strategy and motives. When Clinton sat down to deliver his radio address that cold February day, he knew he was about to face the next great challenge of his second term. "Bosnia taught us a lesson: In this volatile region, violence we fail to oppose leads to even greater violence we will have to oppose later at greater cost," he told the audience. "We must heed that lesson in Kosovo."

Using or Losing NATO

The Clinton of 1999 was a more toughened, more experienced, and shrewder president than the Clinton who had taken office in 1993. He had entered the office naïvely believing that the world could be held at bay, or that he could subcontract international affairs to his foreign policy team while he himself dealt with domestic policy. Now he knew that he could not repeat that mistake and that his own persistent leadership was needed. He had learned the harsh lesson of Bosnia: Diplomacy without the threat and use of force would not work in the Balkans.

In the earlier phase of dealing with the crisis in the Balkans, Clinton had been captivated by the idea that eternal, unyielding ethnic antagonisms, about which the West could do very little, had driven the conflicts there. But in his instinctive search for practical answers,

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Sidney Blumenthal, *a former special assistant to President Bill Clinton, is the author of the forthcoming book,* The Clinton Wars *(Farrar, Straus, Giroux: May 2003) from which this article was adapted.*

Photo: In 1999, Bill Clinton with U.S. soldiers based at Camp Bondsteil in Kosovo. *Reuters*

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Clinton's political sense reasserted itself, and he eventually grasped that it was politics above all that was behind the Balkan conflagration. Clinton peered into Milosevic's heart and saw a politician—an evil one, but a politician nonetheless. For Clinton, on the Balkans, this was the beginning of wisdom and recovery.

Clinton realized that passivity and fatalism in foreign policy were self-defeating. In both Bosnia and Rwanda, the United States, with its preponderance of power, had made a statement to the rest of the world by its inaction. Being the indispensable nation put added burdens on the United States to assume a greater, more varied responsibility for international stability. Clinton had never been hesitant about the use of force, but by his second term he felt thoroughly comfortable using it, having ordered the U.S. military into action many times. The success in Bosnia, more than anything else, had established a precedent.

After the Bosnian war, he recognized that he had to persuade the NATO allies to join in action in Kosovo from the very beginning. In Bosnia, President George H.W. Bush had left the allies to pursue their own self-serving interests; the British and French played treacherous games with Milosevic and then connived to confound the Americans. And just as Clinton had eventually learned lessons from this inherited disaster, different leaders in Britain, France, and Germany had also learned from the failures of their predecessors. Clinton was no longer dealing with British and French governments undermining his intentions. On the contrary, he was enthusiastically supported. He had also strongly advocated the expansion of NATO, so that it now included Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary, bordering on the Balkans. Kosovo would test this expanded Western alliance.

Kosovo was the central challenge remaining to full European integration after the fall of the Soviet Union. If the crisis there were allowed to fester and ethnic cleansing allowed to succeed, Europe would be inundated with refugees. The human tragedy would be appalling. This might well demoralize the center-left political parties, but right-wing ones would seize on the developments to gain influence, exploiting fears about increased immigration and asylum seeking. NATO would seem a feckless, purposeless organization: If it could not be mobilized to ward off this new threat in Europe, what use was it? The incentive for former Warsaw Pact countries to join it would be drastically reduced; NATO expansion would become an empty exercise. Moreover, the absence of U.S. power would trigger traditional rivalries among the European countries and hamper Britain's influence, given its link to the United States. Reform in Russia would be slowed down or derailed, as conservative political forces there would be galvanized by Serbian defiance of the West. And without the Balkan puzzle solved, Turkey and Greece might also be propelled into renewed conflict.

President Clinton was attempting to carve a path between the left, which advocated an international system upholding the rule of law but was leery of the use of force, and the right, which believed that U.S. strength should compel the rest of the world to line up behind it. The weakness of the first was matched by the arrogance of the second. Both, Clinton and his advisers felt, corroded the international alliances needed for collective security and action in the long run.

In the United States itself, if Clinton's new internationalism seemed merely the impotent gesture of a Democratic president, foreign policy would be viewed as the projection of narrow national interest rather than as the means to create an expansive community of nations, as Clinton believed it was. Isolationism, unilateralism, and protectionism would gain ground. New global initiatives for international labor standards, environmental protection, and women's rights—putting "a human face on the global economy," as Clinton described the Third Way between command economies and laissez-faire policies—would be radically set back.

Clinton was no longer the junior figure among the Western powers that he had been when he became president. Now he was a senior statesman, the one in office longest and the most experienced, and the political role model for a new generation of center-left leaders. Across Europe, leaders of entrenched social democratic parties looked to Clinton as a political trailblazer—reforming his party, the welfare state, and global economics all at the same time. He was the most sophisticated, knowledgeable, innovative—and European—American president in their lifetimes. Kosovo was a crisis for them all. If they succeeded in there, they would gain a strengthened platform for the Third Way and for their new ideas about globalization and interdependence. Clinton himself well understood the stakes.

Campaign by Committee

On March 24, after Milosevic rejected negotiations, the bombing of Serb positions in Kosovo started, and Clinton addressed the nation. Thus began NATO's first war, the first war ever fought to reverse an act of genocide.

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Milosevic took the bombing as a signal to accelerate his ethnic cleansing. His army swept into Kosovo and drove nearly one million Kosovar refugees from their homes. But while the world's media broadcast pictures of the effects of NATO's bombing, Serb tank battalions were not credentialing CNN correspondents to ride with them as they massacred Kosovars, and public support in most of Europe was fragile and shaky. (Only later, when television pictures began to show trains bearing the refugees fleeing from their countryside—images reminiscent of trains bearing Jews being shipped to concentration camps by the Nazis—did European public opinion begin to change.) In late March, Bodo Hombach, an aide to German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, delivered a discouraging briefing in my office at the White House. In western Germany, support was at 60 percent, but in eastern Germany, only about one-third. A majority of Greens, the Social Democrats' coalition partner and the party of Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, were opposed to the use of force in the Balkans; only 28 percent of all Germans believed that Milosevic would be forced to admit defeat. In Italy, public opinion was even shakier, and in Greece, an overwhelming majority were opposed. "We need to win quickly," Hombach told me.

On March 30, after a political strategy meeting in the Yellow Oval, the president took me aside to discuss the war. His approval ratings, after less than a week of bombing, were beginning to slip. "I feel quite comfortable, even if it takes weeks and weeks," he said. "Building up popularity is for this. If the popularity isn't for this, what's it for?" Great Britain, Clinton believed, was firm and would be staunch to the end. British Prime Minister Tony Blair had declared that the Kosovo war was a humanitarian war "in defense of our values, rather than our interests," and Clinton relied on him to keep the alliance together and avoid being "nickel and dimed." It was Blair who took on the task of asking Javier Solana, then defense chief of NATO, to approve broader bombing targets, which Solana did. Prime Minister Massimo D'Alema of Italy had asked for a bombing halt, but Clinton talked him out of it, and in return, helped D'Alema with his political efforts to win public support for the bombing campaign as it widened. Schroeder, who also faced a difficult domestic political situation, was supportive. Milosevic had tried, with Russian help, to wrangle a cease-fire, but Schroeder had conferred with Clinton and then told Russian prime minister Yevgeny Primakov that any such deal would be rejected. The Germans were checking the Russians. The alliance was holding.

But the bombing did not stop Milosevic. After a week, the political stresses on the NATO coalition grew exponentially, and within the U.S. administration debate continued on the proper strategy for conducting the war. In his speech on March 25, Clinton had said, "I do not intend to put our troops into Kosovo to fight a ground war," a line that national security council speech writers, with the approval of National Security Advisor Samuel "Sandy" Berger, had inserted and that Clinton did not question at the time. Clinton felt he needed to maintain national and international unity at all costs; otherwise, he felt he would be playing into Milosevic's hands. He didn't want to set off a debate about ground troops with the Congress. Equally important, he didn't want to spark a debate among the allies. Even if ground troops had been planned at the beginning, it would have taken two to three months to deploy them, and Milosevic would have rolled through Kosovo in any case. Clinton hoped the bombing might force Milosevic to concede within days, but as a practical matter, in the short run, it didn't make a difference.

Kosovo was the central challenge remaining to full European integration after the fall of the Soviet Union. If NATO could not be mobilized to ward off this new threat in Europe, what use was it?

That early calculation, however, could not last over time, and he came to regret the line about ground troops. In private, he railed about it having limited his options, and in April, Berger went on television to say that all options were open. But there were problems with the Pentagon. The Joint Chiefs resisted a ground war that might well produce many casualties and that had no clear exit strategy, one of the stipulations of the Powell doctrine, the military codification of the Vietnam syndrome. Nightmarish visions of Somalia danced in the generals' heads. When it began to seem that the war would be prolonged, Gen. Wesley Clark, the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe (SACEUR), pressed for the deployment of the deadly Apache helicopters. But the Pentagon opposed this suggestion,

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seeing it as a cloaked effort to commit American troops to a ground war. Its planners told the White House that the Apaches would suffer perhaps a 50 percent loss ratio—an utterly contrived figure intended to destroy the option, as Clark saw it. Gen. Hugh Shelton, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, eventually agreed to the deployment of a symbolic force of Apaches in Albania, but these were ultimately withdrawn and never committed to combat.

Meanwhile, Clinton was on the phone every day with his counterparts, and he and Blair worked as a tag team, dividing up the allies to speak to them. "We need to ramp up operations," he told Blair on April 1. That same day he told Schroeder, "Milosevic needs to understand that we are prepared to escalate this campaign for the next couple of weeks. We have no timetable or deadlines." Schroeder agreed. But Clinton found it difficult to convince French President Jacques Chirac to agree to a targeting strategy that included Milosevic's military and communications infrastructure within Serbia proper. So far the bombing had been restricted to targets in Kosovo. Wary of the United States as the "hyperpower," France was hesitant to expand the war. Clinton went on trying to cajole Chirac, but he also used others to get Chirac's agreement for the new targets. When President Jose Maria Aznar of Spain visited the White House in mid-April, Clinton talked of his problems with Chirac, and Aznar took on the task of persuading Chirac, which he did. After a civilian convoy was mistakenly hit by NATO bombs on April 16, Clinton swayed Chirac not to walk out on a NATO leaders' meeting, arguing that his abrupt departure would be interpreted as a sign of open disunity. "We must be upbeat, resolute, and not defensive about our mistakes," Clinton pleaded with him.

In a speech on March 25, Clinton announced, "I do not intend to put our troops into Kosovo to fight a ground war." He later came to regret the statement, and in private railed about it having limited his options.

Ear to the Ground

The humanitarian crisis within Kosovo, meanwhile, was becoming a greater and greater nightmare. Refugees were flowing by the hundreds of thousands into camps in Macedonia and Albania. And the war went on without conclusion, bringing harsh criticism from the right and left. "A colossal failure," railed George Will on ABC's "This Week." Others argued that ground troops should have been put into the field at once, that NATO's failure to do so showed cowardice, perhaps even a special generational cowardice, a desire to achieve results without sacrifice but with politically clean hands. In *The New York Review of Books*, the liberal writer Mark Danner suggested that "Perhaps one day there will be a method to calculate how many Kosovars had to be displaced, how many had to die, for the West to prosecute its 'perfect' war."

The president was planning the 50th anniversary summit meeting of NATO to be held later in the month in Washington. "Blair and Schroeder and I could ride into the sunset, but we've got to do this with NATO intact, having done this as an alliance," he said to me on April 7. "Either it comes out right or we get cremated." But even weeks later the war was still not going well; progress seemed stalled. Criticism was growing and Clinton's popularity continued to drop. He seemed strategically boxed in by his early statement against ground troops, for which Blair was now agitating. Within the administration, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright supported Blair's position. Gen. Clark, too, favored the use of ground troops, but the Pentagon was blocking him.

The night before the NATO summit, on April 22, Blair and Clinton met at the White House. Blair argued in favor of a ground force short of an invasion force that could be deployed in what the military called a "semipermissive environment," that is, in areas where they would not be required to seize territory from an entrenched enemy. Clinton was insistent that the issue of ground troops not be raised in the context of the summit meeting for fear that it would blow up the entire event. None of the other allies were as aggressive as Blair, and if the United States joined the British position, the alliance might fall apart. Blair agreed not to bring the matter up and Clinton agreed that Clark should draw up contingency plans. This was not a commitment to ground troops; it was a decision to have the option on paper. They pledged to each other that the war must be won on NATO's terms: The strategy was open-ended. Clinton was determined that the allies must plan a more intense bombing campaign in Serbia itself, targeting Milosevic's military, his communications, his bridges, and even his and his

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cronies' homes, and must leave the summit reaffirming the war's aims. In this, he succeeded.

On April 28, the House of Representatives voted a resolution on the air war in the Balkans. Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-Ill.) had assured the White House that he could secure a majority in favor, but the true power within the Republican Party unmasked Hastert once again as a figurehead. Republican whip Tom DeLay (R-Texas) ensured that there would be no positive vote for President Clinton. The final vote in the House was a carefully stage-managed tie, 213-213. "Shame! Shame!" chanted the Democrats in unison. But DeLay gloated. He saw Kosovo as "act two of impeachment," according to Rep. Peter King (R-N.Y.). DeLay believed, as he told Republicans, "When the sun rises following the election of 2000, I think we will control both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue because of it." "I don't respect the president, but I don't agree with the president, either," he explained on NBC's "Meet the Press" on May 16.

From Idealism to Power

In early May, the bombing ramped up with devastating effect, the raids now penetrating into Belgrade. Serb surface-to-air missile batteries and radar sites, armored units, governmental buildings, and safe houses for Milosevic's mafia were systematically taken out. Serb soldiers started to desert. A mutiny was reported. Then, on May 7, a precisely targeted missile hit the new Chinese embassy in Belgrade, killing two people. The truth, not publicly acknowledged, was that the CIA had been operating with an old map drawn before the construction of the new building, and had assumed the strike was against a Serb target. No one in the CIA or in any of the armed forces thought to seek information from any American who had recently been in Belgrade. The Chinese persisted in believing that the hit had been deliberate. It was a public relations disaster. Clinton called Blair and vented his frustration: "If we had one TV picture of the 15 [Kosovar] men being roped together and burned alive [by the Serbs], they would be demanding that we bomb the hell out of them. People would be wondering why we haven't leveled the place."

Clinton used a press appearance with King Abdullah of Jordan to shift his position on ground troops while making it appear that his policy had never been set in concrete at all: "I don't think that we or our allies should take any options off the table, and that has been my position from the beginning." The Pentagon almost instantly issued a statement saying that the use of ground troops was not an option, but the president was, in fact, moving toward authorizing precisely that.

In Germany, already precarious public support for the war plummeted by 25 percent. After nearly imploding at their annual conference, the Green Party had voted to support NATO (after a bravura speech in which Fischer told the delegates that if they did not vote in favor of the war they might as well elect Milosevic as their party leader). But Blair's push for ground troops prompted Schroeder to declare that such an option was "unthinkable."

On May 24, Fischer came to Washington to confer about the war, and that night at a dinner held in his honor at the German embassy, I was seated next to him. We had an intense conversation about the German position, particularly on ground troops. We

Clinton meets in the Oval Office with Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Gen. Henry Shelton, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to discuss the NATO campaign in Kosovo in 1999.

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were two members of the generation of '68, easily recognizable to each other politically, trying to find common ground. Fischer, the son of a Hungarian immigrant butcher and a German mother, had been a scruffy oppositional militant in Frankfurt; was a former roommate of Daniel Cohn-Bendit, "Danny the Red," with whom he had organized a group called Revolutioner Kampf, or Revolutionary Struggle, and had been arrested in street demonstrations. By the 1990s, his left-wing associates were accusing him of being a changeling, trading in his black leather motorcycle jacket for an establishment Armani suit in an act of surpassing opportunism. But in the German Foreign Office, he was respected as capable, strong, and very well prepared for his work. His odyssey and political predicament paralleled in an especially dramatic way that of American and British activists who had undertaken their own journeys from the 1960s to the center-left of the 1990s. The charge against Fischer that he was a hollow opportunist was a kind of German echo of the "character issue" that conservatives raised about Clinton. Fischer, of course, had been a true radical, which Clinton never was, but the accusation was similar: Fischer's idealism and his character must be false because he had power, because he had fought for it, and because he used it.

Fischer was morally and politically serious as he worked through the German question of "the ghosts of the past," as he put it to me, the ghost of war and the ghost of the Holocaust. Fischer's generation had been imbued with the idea that "no more war" and "no more Auschwitz" were complementary. But the Kosovo war confronted Germans with a choice: to be pacifist meant to accept genocide. And now the choice was becoming even more difficult. What would it mean for NATO to let Milosevic win? Shouldn't all the options be pursued to end the greater evil? Couldn't Germany support a "coalition of the willing" that would deploy troops, if by a given time the air war had not turned in NATO's favor? Germany would not have to join that coalition, but couldn't it support it? At the end of the conversation, Fischer said he was coming to the conclusion that he could agree to such a formulation, and he soon held a press conference announcing it.

On April 25, the last day of the NATO summit meeting, President Clinton and Russian President Boris Yeltsin had a 90-minute telephone conversation. In the face of allied unity, Yeltsin had decided to cut himself loose from the Serbs, whose cause was alienating Russia from its larger interests with the West. He appointed Viktor Chernomyrdin, the former prime minister and a close ally, as his special envoy to the Serbs. "I don't care what you have to do, just end it. It's ruining everything," Yeltsin said to him. After initial conversations with Vice President Gore, with whom Chernomyrdin had conducted productive joint U.S.-Russian communications on various issues for years, Strobe Talbott was sent as the U.S. negotiator. And—an American suggestion—a neutral party was brought in to buttress Chernomyrdin, Finnish president Martti Ahtisaari. The three became an effective team, working together for weeks to bring Milosevic to his senses.

On June 2, Sandy Berger submitted a new options memo to the president, saying that ground troops would be necessary if negotiations should fail. The next day, at Milosevic's palace in Belgrade, when Ahtisaari spelled out for him the havoc that would be wrought on him if he persisted, Milosevic turned to his fellow Slav, looking for support, but Chernomyrdin was a blank wall. He told him to sign the Russian draft of an agreement that called for "all Serb forces out." Milosevic crumbled.

Within hours of receiving the news, Clinton held a long-scheduled cabinet meeting. "The agreement may be great, but we don't know that yet," he told his cabinet. Albright spoke next: "Yes, there are a lot of moving parts." "We got into Kosovo immediately compared to Bosnia," the president reflected. "This is not just about beating Milosevic, but [about] reversing ethnic cleansing. That's the ultimate test." Secretary of Defense William Cohen offered congratulations: "There are two successes here: the success of the air campaign and the diplomatic success." But Berger the pragmatist jumped in: "Put your pride in a lockbox. There's still no better than a 50-50 chance. Less is more here." Clinton emphasized the politics of the allied coalition as essential to victory: "NATO never had to wage a war for 50 years. This is the first operation this alliance has had to engage in for 50 years. The best thing Bush did in Desert Storm was to get Arab countries to go along. Bosnia took four years. Running a campaign by committee is a challenge. There was second-guessing from the moment it began. But our crowd maintained a positive frame of mind. I will go to my grave grateful we hung together." The president then discussed the war's tactics, first referring to the air campaign and then to ground troops: "There was a gross underestimation of the damage we have done [in the air campaign] to the Serb army—and we kept all options open."

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Seamlessly, without a stop, he linked this foreign crisis to his domestic politics: "We haven't allowed the White House to become paralyzed. Under the most adverse circumstances, we have got a lot done." Some Democrats believed that if he flatly rejected dealing with the Republican Congress, it would "rebound to the Democrats' credit," he noted. But "those Democrats who believe that are wrong," and he had managed to "get the Republican Congress to get a good deal of what we want." Not only did he have faith in his political ability, but he also argued that producing results was essential for the Democrats: "If you're progressive, you always have to legitimize the government enterprise. We need to do those things that we can do. We won't get everything we want, but we need to push for them. Stay upbeat. We'll get good results. There's always going to be an adverse environment. We have to have a multi-front war here we're waging for the American people." And he launched into a discussion of his latest education bill.

A First Among Equals

In 1999, two weeks after Milosevic's defeat in the war in Kosovo, President Clinton traveled to Cologne, Germany, for the G-7 Economic Summit. The summit had loomed as a potential danger point if by then the Kosovo war was not concluded. On President Clinton's national security staff and among the allies, much anxiety was fixed on that meeting. But Cologne was suffused with the glow of the allied victory and the success of Clinton's leadership. Now the president led the other six nations in approving an initiative that slashed the debt of heavily indebted poor countries by 70 percent—a reduction stipulating that the funds would go instead to social expenditures in education, children's health care, and AIDS prevention. Clinton also led in creating with the Europeans a stabilization pact for the Balkans, a diplomatic instrument for establishing the mechanisms and financing for reconstruction. He polished an agreement on international financial stabilization. And he met for the last time with Yeltsin, an exhausted volcano, who agreed to the last touches on the peace agreement with Serbia.

The Kosovo war would be the last war fought on European soil in the "century of total war." Conflict ended in the Balkans except for spasms in Macedonia. Both the European Union and NATO continued to expand without disruption. On Oct. 5, 2000, the last revolution toppling a remnant regime from the communist era took place in Yugoslavia: A beleaguered Milosevic announced an election and then tried to void its results when he lost it; instead of succeeding in imposing his rule, however, he provoked his overthrow. He was arrested and placed on trial for crimes against humanity at The Hague before the United Nations War Crimes Tribunal.

After the Kosovo war, other world leaders regarded Clinton with a deference that extended beyond his role as the chief of state of the number-one power. They considered him a first among equals because of who and what he was, not only because of the country he represented. They knew that he understood in depth their own countries' economics and history and politics like no other U.S. president before him. Because of their implicit trust in him, U.S. prestige reached a zenith it had not enjoyed since perhaps the presidency of John F. Kennedy, when the Western leadership had not been so close. "Because of his empathy and understanding, the world felt included and not resentful of America," a British cabinet minister told me.

But Clinton's vision of international relations in the 21st century was not a rhetorical trope. He did not peer through a hazy lens into a nebulous future. Rather, he saw sharply defined problems requiring constant engagement to achieve practical solutions. He assumed nothing, not least eternal American preeminence, nor did he believe that the world was there for the taking or the ordering. And in his organization of the center-left leaders who gathered strength and numbers after the Kosovo war, he encouraged the new forces of hope.

Later that June, President Clinton visited the Stenkovic refugee camp in Macedonia, just across the mountainous border from Kosovo. About half its inhabitants had already left to go home, but about 20,000 people remained in the sea of tents and mud. Upon our arrival, children surrounded us, many of them speaking English and asking to meet with the president. As was his wont, Clinton spent more than an hour sitting with groups of families, listening to their harrowing stories. Then he climbed atop a wooden crate to address the thousands assembled before him: "We're proud of what we did because we think it's what America stands for, that no one ever, ever should be punished and discriminated against or killed or uprooted because of their religion or their ethnic heritage." They chanted "Clinton!" and "U.S.A!"

It wasn't long before all the people at Stenkovic were returned to their villages, and the camp disappeared.

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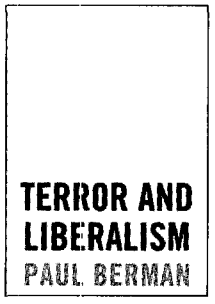
The Orwell Temptation

Are intellectuals overthinking the Middle East?

BY JOSHUA MICAH MARSHALL

MAY YOU LIVE, AS THE CHINESE curse has it, in interesting times. For the last 18 months, we've all been living in "interesting times"—often frightfully so. Yet for intellectuals there is always a craving that times would be ... well, just a little more interesting.

That's been especially true for the last half century because a shadow has hung over political intellectuals in the English-speaking world, and in some respects throughout the West. It is the shadow of the ideological wars (and the blood-and-iron wars) that grew out of World War I—from communism, to fascism, appeasement, vital-center liberalism, and the rest of it. Even as these struggles congeal into history, their magnitude and seriousness hardly diminish. Understanding fascism, understanding that it could be neither accommodated nor appeased, understanding that Soviet communism was really rather like fascism—these were much more than examples of getting things right or of demonstrating intellectual courage and moral seriousness. These insights, decisions, and moments of action came to *define* those qualities.



TERROR AND LIBERALISM: *by Paul Berman* W.W. Norton & Company, $21.00

Since then, things have never been quite the same. Like doctors who want to treat the most challenging patients or cops who want to take down the worst criminals, it's only natural for people who think seriously about political and moral issues to seek out the most challenging and morally vexing questions to ponder and confront. Yet, since the Cold War hit its middle period in the late 1950s, nothing has really quite compared. For a time, the struggles of the 1960s came to rival those heady days from earlier in the century. But the tenor was too antic, the stakes too meager, and the legacy too mixed to ever quite match up. And while momentous, the collapse of communism in the late 1980s was bittersweet for intellectuals. In his essay "The End of History," Francis Fukuyama even posited that history had "ended" with the collapse of communism, ushering in an era in which there would be no more great debates or challenges, but rather a bourgeois millennium of endlessly growing investment funds, a brave new world of consumer appliances. Later, the Balkans provided a crisis of moral weight sufficient to rival those earlier times—especially for those writers and journalists, mostly on the center-left, who had the courage and intrepidity to go there. But Yugoslavia's collapse was essentially a local affair, with no clear connections to the world beyond the mangled and rancid history of the region.

September 11 changed all that. Al Qaeda's war on America and America's war on terrorism provided just such a vast field for thought and action. In the months after the attacks, especially on the right, writers began

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identifying the radical Islamist menace with fascism—Islamo-fascism, as the catch phrase had it. The idea that the war on terror should be seen as the latter-day equivalent or extension of the battles against last century's totalitarianisms has been bandied about in opinion columns and magazine articles for more than a year with varying degrees of seriousness. Paul Berman's new book *Terror and Liberalism* aims to give it intellectual ballast, a moral seriousness, and analytic grounding. Berman is well suited to the task. Though this way of thinking about Islamist fanaticism has largely been the province of the right, Berman is a man of the left—and, just as important, the right part of the left. He is a member of the board of *Dissent* magazine, and though he came of age with the New Left of the 1960s, he is part of the dissident, post-socialist, libertarian left, its most rigorous, morally serious branch.

Berman's book is by turns penetrating, insightful, honest, sloppy, erudite, superficial, hot-blooded, serious, and florid. But it is always intense. It begins with a discussion of September 11, moves into a long analysis of Sayyid Qutb—a seminal ideologue of Islamism—and proceeds through a discussion of the gathering storm clouds of suicidal Islamist violence that brought us to the current crisis. The book's entire second half has the feel of being written in a single sitting; that's not a comment on the quality of the writing so much as a sense that the prose could only be the product of a mad dash through so much history, from fascism to Egyptian Islamism to Lincoln, and then doubling back to explorations of mid-20th century theories of totalitarianism. Though this is a serious book, it is shot through with an equally serious flaw: the desire to inflate the threat of Islamist violence—and particularly its intellectual stakes—to levels beyond what they merit and to force them into a template of an earlier era, for which Berman has an evident and understandable nostalgia. Over the course of the book, the disjointedness between what the radical Islamist menace is and what Berman wants to make it ranges from merely apparent to downright painful, and ends up obscuring as much as it clarifies. And, unfortunately, the obscuring elements may be the more important ones. Given the role intellectuals are playing in this war, these are mistakes that could have dire real-world costs.

The Neverending Story

The heart of Berman's argument is that the violence of al Qaeda is neither simply the extreme response of an oppressed group nor the alien and unknowable product of a religion and culture fundamentally different from our own. Much of the book's first half is taken up with an effort to show that Islamism is ideologically and historically tied to the extremisms that rocked Europe and most of the rest of the world through much of the 20th century. Berman's most powerful passages are those that show the deep similarities between radical, martyrdom-obsessed Islam and the nihilist, irrationalist totalitarian movements of the early and middle 20th century. (In arguing that Baathist Arab nationalism is a latter-day variant of fascism, he seems on considerably weaker ground.)

Unlike fascism or communism, militant Islam isn't a rising power, but a threat precisely because of its dysfunction and weakness.

Berman forces his readers to see the irrationalism of the extremist branch of political Islam, recognizing that the movement is not just anti-American or violent or dangerous but, in fact, deeply pathological. Like every extremist movement that posits a sufficiently transcendent utopia, it is capable of rationalizing almost any degree of brutality and butchery in achieving that goal. In radical Islamism, as in the totalitarianisms of the past, one sees the same mixture of ancient, seemingly immutable, and thus reassuring beliefs coming into vexed confrontation with modernity—and producing some hideous amalgam that combines the worst of the two. One is reminded of Churchill's warning that Nazism might cast the world into "a new Dark Age, made more sinister, and perhaps more protracted, by the lights of a perverted science."

Through Berman's book runs a constant note of overstatement in how liberals or "the left" allegedly try to rationalize or explain the excesses of the various branches of what Berman calls "Muslim totalitarianism." Yet there is a temptation for liberals, who watch the Bush administration launch out onto repeated military forays that mix military aggression with democratic idealism, to reach for the odd comforts of foreign policy realism. When faced with the prospect of one or more—probably more—for-

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eign wars, it's easier to fall back on concerns about stability and prudence, rather than confront the fact that many of the regimes in our crosshairs are hideously repressive and brutal, the sort liberals and progressives have long rallied and supported wars against. As much as right-wingers overstate the matter, there is an element of truth to the charge that contemporary liberals see oppression most clearly when it shines through the prism of racial or religious oppression.

When Baghdad finally fell, reaction in the Arab world took many forms, each intense and ambiguous. But one unmistakable variety was a sort of chagrin over the fact that it had taken the tanks of a Western power to rid Iraq of what was an unmistakably hideous regime. Antiwar liberals, if they were frank with themselves, couldn't help but feel a parallel moral unease. As much as President Bush had acted as a bully on the international stage, as much as the lead-up to war had been destructive, clumsy, and dishonest, by early April the war he started had brought down a regime of death squads and secret police, foreign aggression, and internal oppression. Those are things liberals are supposed to oppose, and usually do. Yet those who opposed Bush's war—even with good reason—had to concede that their preferred course would have left the torture chambers running indefinitely.

Berman strives to raise that moral discomfort to the level of acute pain, as a means of setting his readers to a greater challenge: to recognize radical Islam and Baathism—the two variants of Berman's Muslim totalitarianism—for what he sees them to be, not just dangerous movements but the latest incarnations of the totalitarian scourges of the 20th century. But there's a catch: Refusing to see the threat as a both a mirror and a continuation of those historic struggles doesn't just connote a difference of opinion; in Berman's view it equates to assuming the role of that era's most discredited figures—to becoming the modern-day equivalent of the interwar Europeans who wouldn't recognize Hitler's evil, then attempted to explain it away, and finally embraced it.

Lonely in Lackawanna

Berman, in other words, seeks to lay the template of fascism and anti-fascist commitment onto the current reality of fanatical Islamic terrorism and Arab nationalist authoritarianism. Yet reading his book one cannot help but feel that the equation never quite works. There are similarities both meaningful and suggestive. But the analogy is not only incomplete, it is fundamentally wrong. One can recognize the grave dangers posed by radical Islamism without forcing it into a mold in which it does not fit.

One of the book's shortcomings is Berman's argument that the world of Islam and its fanaticisms are really not so exotic or distinct from the intellectual and ideological history of Europe. When one considers the long relationship between Christianity and Islam, as well as the more recent interpenetrations brought about by Western colonialism, there is much to be said for this argument. But Berman would have to be much more thoroughly grounded in Islamic theology and history to make that argument credible, and he is quite candid with readers that this is a depth of expertise he lacks. A deeper shortcoming crops up when Berman begins to chart the course we must take to do battle against the Muslim totalitarian menace. Though the battle may sometimes require bullets and bombs, it is also a battle of ideas. That battle, Berman argues, will be principally fought in London and Paris, Jersey City and Lackawanna, the Buffalo suburb where six Yemeni immigrants recently pled guilty to visiting a bin Laden training camp in Afghanistan in 2001.

But are these analogies really apt? Given the fact that the virus of murderous Islam seemed to blossom most fully in the Muslim emigrant enclaves of the West, it is probably true—at least partly—that the intellectual battle over Islamism will be hashed out there as much as in Cairo or Riyadh. But among whom exactly? Is there really anyone in the United States or Western Europe, besides emigrants from Muslim countries, for whom radical Islamism holds any attraction? Communism or fascism, by contrast, held a profound allure for many intellectuals in Europe and not a few in the United States; indeed, as the world spiraled toward catastrophe in the late 1930s, the ideological terrain became increasingly polarized until fascism seemed to many the only reliable check against communism, and vice versa. What today is even remotely comparable to this? Feckless losers like John Walker Lindh and Jose Padilla are just the exceptions that prove the rule. Berman thinks that there are too many in the West who make excuses for Islamist barbarity, even justify it—perhaps are even secretly entranced by it. But his evidence consists primarily of comments from the likes of Noam Chomsky. No doubt Chomsky looms large in certain recesses of lower Manhattan and for a few undergraduates at elite universities. But is he really central to the political debate in the United States? Not even close.

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Weak in Review

When comparing "Muslim totalitarianism" to fascism, communism, or other totalitarian utopianisms, the most striking thing about radical Islamism, and the Muslim world generally, is not its strength but its weakness. Indeed, the weakness of the world of Islam—an ideology and culture that sees itself not only as superior to the West and the world's other great civilizations but as properly in the vanguard of history—is the kernel of the threat it poses, the heart of violent Islamism's toxicity. At the beginning of the 21st century most of the world is, for better or worse, rushing along the current of globalization. By any measure, the world of Islam lags far behind. With the exception of a few countries with vast amounts of wealth based on natural resources, it is impoverished and trailing the rest of the world on numerous fronts. Where is the great Muslim power? There is none. Where is the world of Islam's advanced technology-driven economy? There is none.

The dissonance between the Islamic world's historic self-conception and present-day reality is what produces so much of the rage in the Middle East, which grows cancerous when filtered into various extremist ideologies. Much of the rest is produced by Muslims who exist both in this world of Islam and in the very different world of the West, adding a further toxic blend to the mix—what historians once called "colonial rage." Unlike fascism or communism, militant Islam isn't a rising power, but a threat precisely because of its dysfunction and weakness.

If it weren't for the fact that fanatical Islamist terrorists might get their hands on weapons of mass destruction, the sad fact is that few would even care. Of course, the fact that they could get their hands on weapons of mass destruction is a serious caveat. But it does place the issue in a certain context. It is a grave threat, but in a very specific, physical way—a threat to liberal societies but hardly the kind of ideological or political threat that great totalitarianisms posed a half a century ago. Islamist fanatics might destroy a whole city in the West, a catastrophic event. But they'll never conquer or subvert a country. And this is the heart of the difference. To paraphrase Arthur Schlesinger, Islamism is a danger to the West but hardly a danger in the West—or China, or Latin America, or anywhere else where Islam is not already the dominant religion.

For intellectuals, however, there is always a temptation to take momentous, morally serious questions and make them out to be slightly more momentous and world-historical than they really are. Call it the Orwellian temptation. George Orwell not only epitomized what an intellectual can and should be. He has also become the symbol of the role the best intellectuals played in those critical mid-century years. Along the way, however, the image he cast—or rather his ghost, or his shade—has also become part of the pornography of intellectuals. Berman has given way to this craving.

Terror and Liberalism ends with an injunction to stamp out the bacillus of nihilism and totalitarianism in the Muslim world because our safety is incompatible with their continued existence. "In the anti-nihilist system," Berman writes, "freedom for others means safety for ourselves. Let us be for the freedom of others." Given the increasingly small, integrated world we now live in, this may well be correct; our safety and well-being, let alone the perpetuation of our values, are probably incompatible with abandoning a large swath of humanity to a field of poverty, fanaticism, and oppression that is a breeding ground for virulent extremism which can, in turn, lash out against the rest of the world.

Is there really anyone in the United States for whom radical Islamism holds any attraction? Feckless losers like John Walker Lindh and Jose Padilla are just the exceptions that prove the rule.

Recalling those vivid images of the Twin Towers' collapse, it is uncomfortable to have to argue that someone is *overstating* the danger of radical Islam. Nevertheless, to confront the very real threat we face, nothing is more important than seeing that danger for what it is—not through the distorting prism of our grandparents' world. We have now toppled one of the worst regimes in the region. We have a foothold in the heartland of Islam. We have to decide how to proceed. Do we declare all-out war with much of the Muslim world or craft an approach more narrowly tailored to secure our safety and advance their freedom? Grandiose visions beget grandiose actions, which often end tragically. And grandiosity is a sin of intellectuals, too. ●

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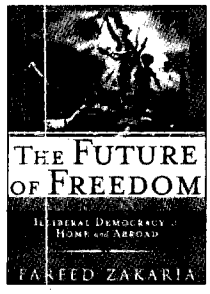
Elective Surgery

Democracy and freedom don't necessarily go hand in hand.

BY GARY HART

THERE IS NO MORE CHERISHED political assumption in the United States than that democracy is good and every other form of government is either bad or inferior. In a book expanding on a thesis published in *Foreign Affairs* two years ago, Fareed Zakaria challenges that assumption and posits a superior alternative, one he calls constitutional liberalism.

Zakaria summarizes his argument as such: "Modern democracies will face difficult new challenges—fighting terrorism, adjusting to globalization, adapting to an aging society—and they will have to make their system work much better than it currently does. That means making democratic decision-making effective, reintegrating constitutional liberalism into the practice of democracy, rebuilding broken political institutions and civic associations."



THE FUTURE OF FREEDOM: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad *by Fareed Zakaria*, W. W. Norton & Co., $24.95

Zakaria, editor of *Newsweek International*, has written at least two-and-a-half books here, each different in its own way. The half-book is an historical survey of democracy's course from Roman Republic to the world of the mid-20th century, with emphasis on the merging and diverging of democracy and liberty. And an interesting survey it is, with provocative observations, such as that the Emperor Constantine left the bishop of Rome to produce a form of pre-democratic liberty. Zakaria's argument that the Roman Catholic Church brought democracy to the West by its promotion of liberty (" ... liberty came to the West centuries before democracy") will surely provoke debate. The role of the Greek city-state is diminished as providing only the liberty (for land-owning males) to participate in government but not to be free of its arbitrariness.

The first full book is a treatment of the fate of democracy in nations and regions around the world in modern times, and liberty is often its counterpart not its handmaiden. Here the spotlight sweeps from post-war Europe through selected nations in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. Zakaria draws a direct correlation between economic development and democracy. The higher the per capita income, the stronger the democracy—but only if the income is earned, not produced by the bounties of nature, as in Saudi Arabia. In so many words, he says countries with per-capita incomes between $1,500 and $3,000 have a chance to transition from autocratic or oligarchic rule, but that those below $1,500 are doomed to failure.

The author finds dictatorships in Africa, Latin America, and parts of Asia—in contrast to the Western and East Asian models—moving toward democracy but with little regard for constitutional liberalism, which is to say, individual liberty. A nation, he argues, can move toward democracy and, at the same time, diminish liberality generally and human rights particularly. It is a sobering argument and one whose subtlety may not penetrate the political/media filter that permits only sound bites and slogans to pass through. "Democratic Russia" is good. Never mind that Boris Yeltsin and his successor Vladimir Putin ("popular autocrats"), though elected, largely ruled

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and rule by fiat, that the press is only marginally free, that civil society has yet to take root, and that the rule of law and private property rights are only just emerging.

Zakaria further premises that taxation is central to constitutional liberalism, as distinct from democracy, because it requires the taxing power (the state) to provide services in return. That exchange in turn produces accountability and eventually representation. "This reciprocal bargain—between taxation and representation [sound familiar?]—is what gives governments legitimacy in the modern world."

Zakaria's geographical survey becomes most interesting when it gets to the Arab world. "The Arab rulers of the Middle East are autocratic, corrupt, and heavy-handed. But they are still more liberal, tolerant, and pluralistic than what would likely replace them [if elections were held]." He finds the Arab world trapped between autocratic states and illiberal societies and, thus, probably amenable only to the "shell" of democracy apparently envisioned by Bush administration officials. Given present circumstances, it might be interesting to test American popular reaction if the first election in Iraq after the deposition of Saddam Hussein produced Mullah Omar as the first president of the new Iraqi "democracy." And, contrary to popular impression, Zakaria points out that 800 million Muslims presently live in electoral democracies.

It is the final book, a survey of democracy in 21st-century America, that will stir up the most discussion. "[M]ost Americans have lost faith in their democracy," Zakaria says, because, as it becomes more "democratic"—that is to say, popular, diffuse, and open—it has eroded individual liberty. Americans don't trust their government and thus are alienated from it. Voting turnout declines. He argues, somewhat confusingly, that as Americans become more individualistic they also have less liberty. The quality of leadership, public and private, has declined demonstrably, he claims, contrasting Franklin D. Roosevelt to George W. Bush to make the point. By making the political system more open, we have also made it more porous to armies of lobbyists and interest groups. Gone is any sense of national purpose, unity, or common good. The constitutionally protected media, under the rampant influences of democratization and marketization, "sensationalizes, dramatizes, and trivializes news" and inflames rather than tempers public passions. The republican ideal of the founders has simply given way to one vast, ungovernable, unbalanced, and greedy "democracy"—in effect, Alexander Hamilton's worst nightmare.

New elites ("a bunch of smart college graduates"), self-interested, autonomous, and narrow, have replaced the old governing elites who were characterized by disinterest, noblesse oblige, and national service. As market deregulation has reached its zenith, so deregulation of politics—excessive democracy—has gone too far. Zakaria's solution? Delegation. "There must be a way to make democratic systems work so that they do not perennially produce short-term policies with dismal results." Delegation of authority to institutions (perhaps like the Federal Reserve Board) above and beyond the murky souk of politics is an approach he favors. Wise men and women, beyond ambition and far from the reach of grubby electoral politics, would make long-term policy and that, in turn, would be implemented by the people's elected representatives.

A nation can move toward democracy and, at the same time, diminish liberality generally and human rights particularly. In Russia, Vladimir Putin, though elected, rules largely by fiat, and civil society has yet to take root.

California, with its rampant referenda, represents the future of American democracy, Zakaria argues. His gloom over the Californication of democracy is not farfetched, he claims, but simply anticipates "a crisis of legitimacy which could prove crippling" to America. How this crippled American democracy becomes "potentially dangerous" is not quite spelled out.

Zakaria is a serious enough thinker and has produced a serious enough book to require serious attention. Either one-dimensional "democracy" or a more nuanced constitutional liberalism with institutional instruments underwriting individual liberty are the choices he offers for the 21st century. He sees no alternatives, though a lively debate stimulated by his book might produce some.

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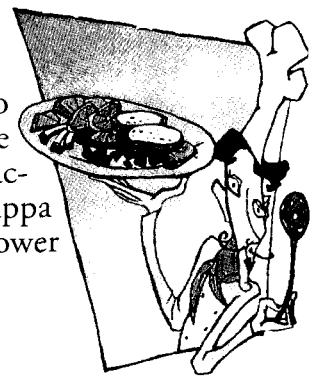
Tidbits & Outrages

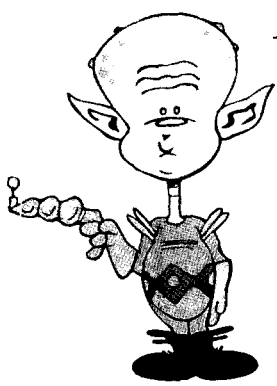
Smoked Salmon



New York restaurateurs have hit upon a creative response to Mayor Bloomberg's recent anti-smoking ordinance. They've begun serving tobacco dishes, including filet mignon in a tobacco-wine sauce, tobacco panna cotta, and tobacco-infused grappa for desert. Not to be outdone, the bar at the Trump World Tower offers a new cocktail that tastes like a cigarette.

LEGISLATING LIZARDS

Soon, New Mexico may once again be known as the "Land of Enchantment," the official motto that was accidentally deleted when state statutes were amended several years ago. Legislation to restore it also establishes an official state butterfly (the Sandia hairstreak) and amphibian (the New Mexico spadefoot toad).

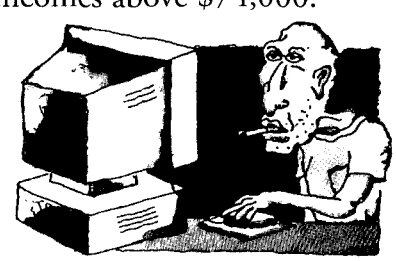


E.T. Come Home

New Mexico lawmakers also established that every second Tuesday in February will be "Extraterrestrial Culture Day," passing a resolution that commemorates the state's association with aliens, which dates back to the purported 1947 UFO crash in Roswell.

TIME FOR A "WAR ON VIDEO GAMES"?

Do video games cause poverty? According to a study by Jupiter Research, households that earn less than $35,000 a year spend 50 percent more time playing video games than those with incomes above $74,000.



21st c. T & A

Weapons systems aren't the only thing that's been updated for Gulf War II. In the spirit of World War II's famous pin-ups, the publisher of girlie-magazines *Maxim* and *Stuff* is shipping 15,000 issues to troops in 40 military sites across the Middle East.

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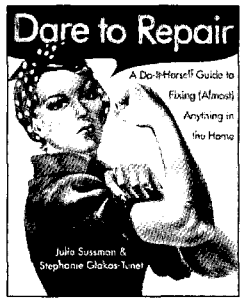
The Girls' Guide to Plumbing and Fixing

Why the latest women's lit will also appeal to men.

BY STEPHANIE MENCIMER

LAST FALL, THE WIFE OF CIA DIRECTOR George Tenet made a splash in Washington with the debut of her new book. The book wasn't the usual tell-all about life inside "the Agency," or a gossipy guide to Washington insiders, or even the increasingly common Washington wives' book on the miracles of pets. No, Stephanie Glakas-Tenet and her co-author Julie Sussman, also a CIA spouse, turned to a far more proletarian subject: the art of fixing toilets, unclogging garbage disposals, and vacuuming refrigerator coils. *Dare to Repair: A Do-It-Herself Guide to Fixing (Almost) Anything in the Home* has since become such a sleeper hit that the pair has been commissioned to write a follow-up, this time a girls' guide to car repair.



DARE TO REPAIR:
A Do-It-Herself Guide to Fixing (Almost) Anything in the Home
by Julie Sussman & Stephanie Glakas-Tenet
HarperCollins $14.95

Dare to Repair promises to school readers in do-it-yourself projects manageable by even the most carpentry-challenged sorority girl. Instructions are helpfully arrayed around drawings of wheelchair-bound seniors replacing doorknobs and pregnant gals installing foot locks. The illustrations give the book a distinctly PC flavor, but it's hardly the product of raging feminists. The acknowledgments are filled with religious references, suggesting a distinctly Christian can-do spirit that seems in keeping with the Rosie the Riveter cover. *Dare to Repair* is filled with cheerleading: "This isn't rocket science. And if this is the hardest thing you've ever done in your life, then sister, you haven't lived ... *Dare* to raise the bar for what you can accomplish. *Dare* to pick up a wrench and tighten the toilet handle that's about to fall off. *Dare* to level the washing machine that's been rockin' and rollin' for months. Grab a screwdriver and dare to install a new smoke detector. *Dare to Repair*!"

The book might have been subtitled, "How to become the repair man you've always dreamed of." Glakas-Tenet and Sussman, for instance, recommend putting masking tape along the edge of the bathtub to protect it from scratches while you chisel out the old rotted seal. Men never do these things. But for the most part, their advice is practical and relies on tools you're likely to have around the house—like a raw potato, which they suggest using to dislodge a broken light bulb from its socket.

In this day of dummies' guides to just about everything—not to mention 40 years after the debut of second-wave feminism—it's a wonder there aren't more books like this already on the shelves. Then again, maybe it isn't. After all, most of the repair projects in the book are the kinds of things that middle-class people generally foist off on immigrants or rural folks who charge an arm and a leg just to show up on the appointed day.

Usually homeowners defend their employment of these contractors by pointing to time constraints. The truth is, though, despite their smarty-pants exteriors, most members of the office park set don't know the first thing about ground wires. That's why they are also unlikely authors of a DIY guide. The women who do write books

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on home improvement tend to come from the lady-of-leisure category. Martha Stewart occasionally wields power tools, but always for ornamental projects, such as, "How to turn a cedar planter into a fetching blanket chest." It's doubtful that Martha fixes her own toilets; she certainly never instructs the rest of us on how to do so.

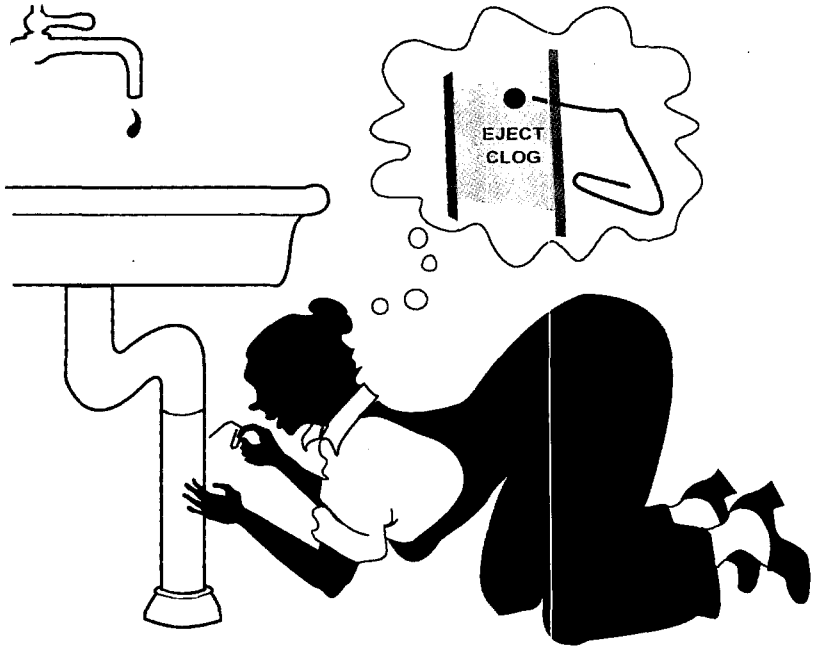
All of which makes Glakas-Tenet and Sussman an interesting demographic. As CIA wives, they are part of Washington's elite brainiac sector. But because many of Washington's most powerful government jobs don't actually come with high salaries, the women write in their introduction that they often couldn't afford to pay someone else to get rid of that annoying, if not life-threatening, leak in the sink. And naturally, George Tenet had better things to do. As a result, the two women got their know-how on the job, and the projects in the book are the most practical of repairs—things women, and men, actually might need to do.

Helpless in Home Depot

Recently, I beta-tested the book just to see how well it holds up to real life. I've employed its tips on fixing locks and resealing two bathtubs and discovered the miracles of silicone (and not the kind that makes your boobs bigger). I replaced the fill valve in a leaking toilet—something a plumber would have charged me $150 to do. I'm soon to be fixing a leaking faucet and changing electrical outlets. Inspired by the possibilities, I even went out on a limb and regrouted some shower tiles without outside instruction. When I mentioned what I was doing to friends and family, they reacted as if I had just hacked into the White House Web site. After I told my father I had resealed the bathtub (an incredibly simple operation) he said, "Wow. You know how to do that?"

These favorable responses, though, didn't quite match my own feelings after taking up the "dare." Instead of feeling empowered by my new mastery of men's work, I felt like a complete moron for having to get this girlie book to discover the secrets of toilet hardware, something any ninth-grader could figure out. I was mortified at not knowing that a little WD-40 will make a lock turn like butter. When I think that I once contemplated getting a new refrigerator because the old brown one no longer matched my new white cabinets, I want to beat my breast in shame. As *Dare to Repair* will tell you, the fridge can be painted. Duh.

After doing a couple of projects, I had to wonder how I could be so entirely ignorant of the workings of my domestic environment. I knew it wasn't a feminist thing—the "man" keeping us down by making dryer-duct cleaning seem like a mysterious art form. I know plenty of men, particularly in Washington, who don't know the right end of a drill bit. The problem, I've deduced, is the changing nature of how this kind of information is transmitted from one generation to the next. Most people I know who are handy learned it from their fathers. My husband, for instance, changes the oil in his car himself, a habit he inherited from his father, who didn't believe in paying someone else to do it. Glakas-Tenet says her father gave her a toolbox when she was just an adolescent.



Christina Larson

My own father taught me how to shoot pheasant, build model airplanes, and distill alcohol, but he really didn't know how to fix much around the house. If he'd known how to fix a toilet, I'm sure he would have shown me so he could make me do it the next time it broke down. Without that education at home, I wasn't likely to learn how to wield a reciprocating saw—or even identify one—anywhere else. Judging from the response to *Dare to Repair*—and my own experiments with it—I'm afraid my experience is becoming much more the norm.

To be sure, the crowds at Home Depot—not to mention the cult status of HGTV, the Home and Garden cable channel—give the impression that Americans are

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rediscovering their inner handyman. But the purchase of a nail gun is not necessarily proof that Americans know how to use one. In fact, the recent rush to Home Depot may actually have revealed just how degraded our collective repair skills have become. In 2002, a record number of homeowners sustained more than 300,000 injuries trying to putter around the house, largely because of unfamiliarity with the tools they were using. The simple screwdriver now sends 10,000 people a year to the emergency room—a sign that some folks may be taking up the mantle of DIY, but that they really have no idea what they're doing.

Maybe today there's simply too much information for parents to pass on, so they have to be more selective in what they force their kids to learn. Defragmenting the hard drive takes precedence over unsticking the deadbolt. Or maybe parents' desire to give their kids a better life means freeing them from such tedium as raingutter evacuation. Obviously, technology has made being handy more difficult, as electronic controls and other "upgrades" virtually rule out any do-it-yourselfing on broken cars and appliances today.

Affluence, too, plays a role by providing the opportunity to hire someone to do your dirty work. (For creative types, this provides the best of both worlds, allowing office-park dads to pat themselves on the back for spending a weekend planking a deck—after a day laborer did a week's worth of backbreaking work digging holes for the footings.) Affluence also means that when something breaks, it's often easier to simply replace it. The shift from a manufacturing-based to a service economy probably has much to do with our lost skills, as power tools were not foreign objects to the guys who built cars for GM. Now, though, if a Web tech wants to get his hands dirty at something manly, he has to make a conscious effort to do it—and take a class at Home Depot first.

The impact of all these cultural changes is cumulative. Once you've stopped changing oil, you lose your understanding of simple auto mechanics and an awareness of what else you might be able to fix cheaply on your own. Perhaps this is no great tragedy. In the modern world, the skills left behind are done so for an evolutionary reason. It does seem, though, that without these most practical of skills, we're losing something essential. We sacrifice a level of independence by turning over every possible maintenance task to a class of service workers. *Dare to Repair* had me wondering whether, as a country, we might be becoming permanently handicapped around the house.

As I discovered how little I knew about my own domestic environment from *Dare to Repair*, I wondered how we would survive another depression. A few years ago, I went to Cuba, where I was astonished by the resourcefulness of the people there. The country lacks any sort of retail or service economy, yet there didn't seem to be a man in Cuba who couldn't work magic with bailing wire and gum to get an ailing Edsel back on the road again. How many of us could even find the oil filter?

My grandparents learned their Depression lessons pretty well. My grandmother, an Illinois farm girl, could probably have killed a chicken and known what to do with it afterward. She could certainly make jam and embroider quilts. Sure, Gram couldn't program the VCR (she didn't even have one), but in the big scheme of things, what's more important, knowing how to stretch your food budget or taping another episode of "Jackass"? My grandfather was a tinkerer extraordinaire who never needed a repairman for his plumbing—and thrifty as he was, he would probably have considered hiring one a disgraceful extravagance.

Today there's too much information for parents to pass on, so they have to be more selective in what they teach their kids. Defragmenting the hard drive takes precedence over unsticking the deadbolt.

I suppose one might argue that delegating repair jobs to the service economy is progress toward a more perfect economic system—comparative advantage, you might call it. Indeed, I can't say I particularly enjoyed fixing my toilet. It was a pain in the ass that I'd happily turn over to someone else. That said, once I figured out how much the plumber cost, and then considered the time I'd waste waiting around for him to show up, I definitely came out ahead.

As the economy limps along and the unemployment figures shoot up daily, a growing number of previously well-off Americans may not have the luxury of making these types of calculations anymore. Hiring a service worker may simply not be in the budget. The boom times of the '90s may have offered homeowners a chance to master the ego-building art of planking a deck, but the recession of '03 may force us to learn the humbling tedium of toilet repair, in which case *Dare to Repair* couldn't be timelier. ●

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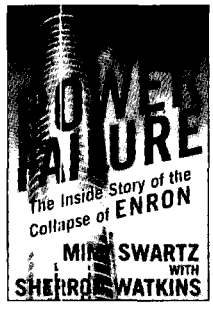
Enron End Run

Whistleblower Sherron Watkins's tell-all doesn't quite add up.

BY MARIANNE LAVELLE

THE MOST EXCRUCIATING MOMENTS in *Power Failure: The Inside Story of the Collapse of Enron*, involve a humiliating salsa-making class and a heart-pounding cross-country ski trek one bitter cold Aspen night. Yes, behind the bad investments, the complex hedging vehicles, and the conflicts of interest that sunk the energy trading behemoth lay these curious scenes of rich executives at play. Nasty, malicious play.

Power Failure is the long-awaited portrait of the company's unraveling through the eyes of Sherron Watkins, the renowned Enron whistleblower, written by award-winning *Texas Monthly* journalist Mimi Swartz. We get a sense of Watkins as a woman apart from her colleagues early on in the story, when she recounts the seemingly trivial recreational activities planned at company management conferences. As it turns out, careers at Enron rose and fell on petty considerations such as the choice between fly fishing or tennis as an afternoon social activity. It wasn't always easy to navigate the shoals between winnerdom and loserdom; how was Watkins to know that three hefty guys from Enron's old, out-of-favor natural-gas pipeline division would show up for the same salsa-making class she had signed up for? Soon-to-be chief executive Jeff Skilling pokes his nose in the door, as if smelling something bad, and retreats after letting Watkins know that he's seen her.



POWER FAILURE:
The Inside Story of the Collapse of Enron
by Mimi Swartz, with Sherron Watkins
Doubleday, $26.00

Then there was the trauma on a snowy trail after dark during an Enron business trip in Colorado. The book contains a priceless photo from this weekend, of Watkins, Skilling, and Andrew Fastow, chief financial officer and schemer, decked out in sunglasses and ski suits, with the majestic Rockies rising behind them. But their smiles of camaraderie belie tension in the mountain air. Fastow and another executive race ahead and leave Watkins behind, alone and inadequately clad for the cold, on a cross-country ski trek across a desolate field to a fancy restaurant. Watkins briefly frets that she will become "the first person in Enron history to succumb to perk death."

Imagine a corporation run by the meanest kids from high school. The ones who were able to claw, cheat, or charm their way to the top of the class, as long as it was a relatively average class. For all its talk of "Enron smart," the company never attracted the cream of the crop from the Ivy Leagues; its business was too obscure, and located in Houston, of all places. Instead, it drew its talent from a peculiar pool of Midwestern overachievers. It was important, in this bunch, to run with the right clique (the traders, not the asset managers). Competition was brutal, not only over deals, but over "deal toys," obscenely expensive crystal knickknacks purchased from Neiman Marcus to commemorate such triumphs. Grown executives would hyperventilate over the pressure to stage the best skit at a company dinner. In his heyday, Skilling once ruminated over a new motto for Enron, "the world's coolest company."

Watkins and Swartz paint a compelling picture of a company too obsessed with maintaining its cool style to actually get around to running a business of substance. Yet one waits in vain throughout the book for some sense of Watkins's inner struggle, her transformation from aspiring Enronite desperately seeking to reel in a big deal to the woman who wrote the dead-on memo predicting

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that the company "will implode in a wave of accounting scandals." Her experiences are recounted in the third person, with detachment. Watkins, it seems, would allow only so much self-scrutiny or exposure.

Though Sherron Watkins is obviously the greatest resource that this book enjoys, the book tries desperately not to be the Sherron Watkins story. The jacket informs the reader that the authors have conducted "hundreds of other interviews" and seek to tell a full narrative of Enron's rise and fall. This is somewhat unsatisfying, since much of this story has already been told, *ad nauseam*, in the press. Because the authors provide no footnotes, and because most of their sources remain anonymous, it is impossible for the average reader to distinguish what information has already been reported and what is new. In fact, there are no blockbuster revelations that add significantly to the known narrative of Enron's demise.

The authors also seem shaky when they venture into what admittedly is the most difficult task for anyone writing about Enron: an explanation of its fatal accounting shenanigans. Swartz and Watkins opt to assume that the reader understands what it means "to price some put options ... at the current stock price for a six-month period," and grasps the significance of the time when Enron "barely rolled its commercial paper." But by doing so, they limit their audience. Contrast their approach with the Enron coverage of *The Wall Street Journal*, which despite its financially sophisticated readership, never hesitated to spend a few words on a simple, step-by-step explanation of the company's fiscal mischief. As a result, it was better able to convey to all readers the drama of these ill-fated transactions.

One quibble: Doubleday, which reportedly paid the pair a $500,000 advance, apparently skimped on the copyediting. Numerous typographical and spelling errors become distracting. Note for future editions: Viacom's chief executive is Sumner Redstone, not "Summer," Enron investigator Bill McLucas has no "k" in his name, two "e's" are quite enough for the word "energy," and the bankrupt dot-com in which Enron disastrously invested was Rhythms NetConnections (not RhythmsNet Connections.)

But editorial lapses aside, the book's most glaring hole is that it never addresses the question that only it can answer: Who is Sherron Watkins? Is she the tough, salty-tongued accountant raised in Tomball, Texas, whose unwillingness to suffer fools had earned her the nickname "the buzzsaw?" Or is she, at heart, the handsomely paid executive who played the Enron game, up to a point? As Enron's end nears, the book comes as close as it ever does to revealing her true feelings: "Good-bye to the damask tablecloths, the silk lampshades, the plantation shutters, the garden patio, the pretty tree-shaded street in the perfect neighborhood," she muses. But perhaps with Enron, one can't expect much more internal conflict than this. Beyond the trappings of wealth and power, there wasn't much of a company. And now it's gone. ●

The Washington Monthly's Monthly Journalism Award

MICHAEL HAWTHORNE

"Internal Warnings: Industry memos show DuPont knew for decades that a chemical used to make Teflon is polluting workers and neighbors"
The Columbus Dispatch, February 16, 2003

Proving that some corporations do indeed place profit over health and environmental concerns, Michael Hawthorne reveals that DuPont concealed its knowledge that, for at least two decades, a chemical used to make Teflon and similar products has contaminated its workers and public water supplies near its Parkersburg, W. Va., plant along the Ohio River. The chemical, known as C8, builds up in the human bloodstream and doesn't break down in the environment. Concerned that the chemical may cause health problems such as liver damage, cancer, or birth defects, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is expected later this year to determine a national standard for C8.

THE MONTHLY JOURNALISM AWARD is presented each month to one or more newspaper, magazine, radio, or television stories (or series of stories) that demonstrate a commitment to the public interest. We are particularly interested in reporting that explains the successes and failures of government agencies at all levels and of other institutions such as the media, corporations, unions, and foundations that contribute to the existence or solution of public problems. Please send nominations (including a copy of the article or broadcast text) to The Washington Monthly Journalism Award, 733 15th Street, NW, Suite 520, Washington, DC 20005. Or email us at editors@washingtonmonthly.com. Nominations for stories run in March and April 2003 are due May 15, 2003.

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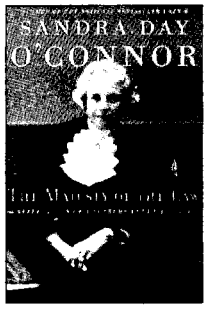
Political Booknotes

Her Majesty

By Lincoln Caplan

SANDRA DAY O'CONNOR, THE first woman on the U.S. Supreme Court and a conservative whose independent streak has made her the swing vote, is now 73. She's said to be close to retiring, and *The Majesty of the Law* could be her valediction. During her 22 years as a justice, O'Connor has achieved a populist-tinged celebrity. As the Westerner who grew up on her family's Lazy B cattle ranch in the Arizona desert and was elected majority leader of the Arizona state senate, she has a self-reliant, democratic aura. As the third-ranked student in her Stanford Law School class whose only job offer when she graduated was to be a secretary, and as the mother who stepped out of the job market to raise her three boys, she has put up with the indignities and carried the responsibilities of upper-class women in her generation.



THE MAJESTY OF THE LAW
Reflections of a Supreme Court Justice
by Sandra Day O'Connor
Random House, $25.95

O'Connor's reflections provide sympathetic and vinegary evidence supporting this view. They come in six parts, ranging from "Life on the Court" through "The Legal Profession and the Courts" to "The Rule of Law in the Twenty-first Century." In a chapter about the the late Thurgood Marshall's personal influence on her during the decade they served together, she wonders how it was possible for this black legal pioneer to confront "the darkest recesses of human nature—bigotry, hatred, and selfishness—and emerge wholly intact." In a chapter that recounts the obstacles to women getting the right to vote and then exercising it, she says that the divergence of men's and women's votes in 1952, the year she came of age politically, gave the lie to the "miserable pre-war stereotype of women following their husbands or fathers, sheep-like, into the polling booth."

But the striking quality of *The Majesty of the Law* is its remoteness. The plucky Arizonan comes across as a woman who holds herself above the fray. Sometimes, her goal is to explain the big picture, whether about the job of the Supreme Court ("to develop a reasonably uniform and consistent body of federal law") or the one it shares with other government bodies. ("We must never forget, however, that the answers to many of our deepest national dilemmas may lie not in Washington, D.C., but in the American spirit of ingenuity embodied in lawmaking authority closest to the people themselves: our state and local legislatures.")

Often, while offering a correction to what she regards as a mistaken point of view, she seems to be avoiding the subject she's writing about. In recent years, the court has dealt with a series of major cases about the balance of power between the federal government and the states, known as federalism. Since 1991, when Clarence Thomas joined the court and provided a fifth vote, a conservative majority has repeatedly struck down federal laws in the name of states' rights, with O'Connor among the five.

The wide perception is that this majority is engaged in narrowing the scope of federal law, especially dealing with civil rights and liberties. Respected observers of the court believe that these justices have led it to engage in what Yale's Jed Rubenfeld calls "anti-anti-discrimination" and the University of Chicago's Cass Sunstein calls "illegitimate judicial activism."

In a chapter called "The Court's Agenda," however, O'Connor states that most of it is "dictated by external forces," including the conservative majority's agenda about federalism. Unconvincingly, she attributes the nation's interest in the subject to the election of Richard Nixon in 1968. The justice praises the court's "struggle with the difficulties it faces" —without saying how big disagreements are joined, what she thinks about them, or why she has taken the positions she has.

Her writing about women and the law is the most engaging and standoffish in the book. She laments that some states didn't "begin to criminalize wife-beating" until the late 19th century and even then that most women "were left simply to forgive and try to forget." Yet nowhere does O'Connor reckon with her vote on grounds of federalism to strike down the Violence Against Women Act, which gave women assaulted because of their gender the right to sue in federal court. And nowhere does she reckon with the contradictory stance she has taken about abortion, joining an eloquent 1992 opinion that upheld *Roe v. Wade* while almost always voting to allow state regulations that limit the scope of a woman's right to choose.

Justices are sometimes praised for ruling with Olympian detachment. O'Connor's writing is less godlike than royal. It's made accessible by moments of humor, tartness, and insight, yet in the manner of a sovereign who has lost touch with her subjects, her *Majesty* is basically aloof.

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Space Balls

By Nicholas Thompson

FOR ALL THE SUCCESS OF ITS battle plan in Iraq and the laser-guided missiles that obliterated their targets in Baghdad, it's hard not to think that America wins wars today as much because of the depth of its pockets as the sharpness of its minds. Iraq's annual gross national product is about $50 billion and our annual military budget is $400 billion. We spent about as much money destroying Iraq as that country spent building itself.

Most major defense projects of the past two decades have come in late, over-budget, or both. Worse, our biggest outlays haven't gone for technologies that are maximally useful in conflicts against the terrorists and rogue and hapless states that smart people have long considered our biggest post-Soviet enemy.

We still spend vastly more on fighter jets suitable for scrambling against hostile

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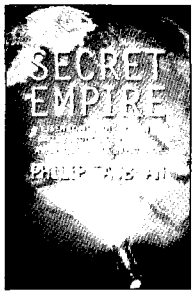
air forces that don't exist than we do on surveillance drones suitable for tracking terrorist networks that do. The biggest, grandest, military project—missile defense—has drained hundreds of billions of dollars without either working or showing the potential to defend against the weapons that future enemies will likely employ.

It's thus helpful to hear the story of a time when the country showed the ability to quickly and smoothly create weapons and tools that mirrored national needs. A longtime *New York Times* reporter, now editorial page editor, Philip Taubman's central message is that the military-industrial complex really worked for a brief period in the 1950s. We knew very little about the Soviet Union's military strength or intentions. Infiltrating the Kremlin high command wasn't easy and the Soviets regularly shot down the spy planes we occasionally sent hurtling over the country with cameras stuck in their bomb bays. So, we had no real sense of whether the Soviets were planning to attack us or who would win if they did.



SECRET EMPIRE: Eisenhower, the CIA, and the Hidden Story of America's Space Espionage
by Philip Taubman
Simon & Schuster, $27.00

But we came up with a solution: high atmospheric and space spying that would keep the cameras out of range of Soviet fire. The scientific and bureaucratic obstacles were fierce. But the country's best minds achieved it, largely ahead of schedule and under budget.

The first major section of Taubman's book describes the birth of the wildly successful U2 project. Originally conceived by a set of dreamers scattered around the RAND Corporation in Santa Monica and various American universities and companies, the project faced daunting technological problems. At the time of the U2's creation, Soviet MiG fighter jets achieved altitudes of about 50,000 feet. So the spy plane needed to fly at about 70,000 feet: an altitude at which cameras rarely work, human blood evaporates, a lack of oxygen reduces engine thrust, and the thin air makes it harder to fly.

But the military-industrial complex solved all of those problems quickly. Thin, elongated wings helped compensate for the lack of lift, and expert pilots compensated for the lack of thrust. Special suits kept the men in the cockpit from exploding. And with the help of Polaroid inventor Edwin Land and others, the plane got a special 36-inch-lens camera that could hold more than a mile of film and take clear pictures showing objects on the ground as small as two and a half feet across.

The U2 flew only 24 missions before Francis Gary Powers was shot down in 1960; it never entered Soviet airspace again. But its career was as sweet as it was short. It proved that the missile gap was a myth, that the dreaded Soviet Bison bombers were scarce, and that we faced no imminent threat. In his memoirs, Dwight Eisenhower wrote, "U-2 information deprived Khrushchev of the most powerful weapon of the Communist conspiracy—international blackmail—usable only as long as the Soviets could exploit the ignorance and resulting fears of the Free World."

Next, Taubman details the creation of the Corona reconnaissance satellite. Though not initially as successful budgetarily or technologically as the U2, the Corona may have proved more important and innovative in the long run. It was designed to take photographs from orbit and then eject film canisters that could withstand atmospheric reentry and literally parachute down to American recovery teams. The first years of the program were a morass of infighting, failed launches, and neglect. But from its first successful launch in 1960 to its end in 1972, Coronas photographed every Soviet ICBM complex and, Taubman writes, "created an invaluable archive of nearly every aspect of Soviet military power."

Lastly, Taubman breezes through the innovations of the past three decades. He touches on the Blackbird, a 1970s spy plane that could get from Los Angeles to Washington in an hour and 10 minutes, and the creation of global positioning satellites. He also makes the now familiar, but still valid, point that this country's reliance on spy satellites ultimately did a fair amount of indirect harm as well by providing such vast data that the CIA became less dependent on actual agents, which explains several of the agency's recent debacles, such as its failure to anticipate September 11 and India's 1998 nuclear tests.

Why did things seem to work better 45 years ago? Taubman's book leads to a few conclusions.

First of all, smarter people populated Washington. The teams that worked on the U2 and the Corona were chock full of the brilliant young technologists who now work in the private sector. Mainly, they came because things just seemed to matter more then. (Having a president who had commanded the troops at D-Day didn't hurt military recruitment either.)

Second, Taubman credits Eisenhower himself, adding to the recent wave of Ike-onification. For one, the general knew how to manage the interservice rivalries that scupper so many good military plans. He gave the U2 project to the CIA instead of the Air Force because he knew that a large bureaucracy would find a way to smother something so new and innovative. The former West Point math and engineering student also cared about science. He allowed high-level White House access to several supremely talented researchers and created the post of White House science adviser. The U2 wasn't dreamed up in an afternoon. It had to ricochet from one study group to another, each modifying the contents and arguments for it along the way. Without scientists pressing for it in the Oval Office, it would never have made the agenda.

Third, the private-sector companies that worked on the project seemed to be more ethical. The rules were weak then. Lockheed Martin's famed "Skunk Works," which built the U2 and numerous other planes, faced little in the way of oversight or reporting requirements. The coalition of private- and public-sector forces that created the U2's camera "would probably be unacceptable, if not illegal" according to today's ethical standards, Taubman argues.

In short, *Secret Empire* is about an America different than we have today. Washington worked, the private sector was honest, and the president understood that science and technology could greatly enhance national security.

The military bloat and misplaced

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priorities of the last two decades have enabled our current president to pulverize opponents in a number of small wars. The insights of a generation ago accomplished something much more important: They helped us avoid the big one.

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Boundless Love

By Stephen Pomper

A FRIEND OF MINE FOUND HERself on the D train into Manhattan one rush hour not so long ago, sitting there reading the paper when into the car walked one of those subway preachers who, from time to time, annoy captive New York commuters. This preacher had a particular chip on his shoulder against homosexuals. He started into a rant, which involved him unleashing strings of anti-gay invective and punctuating them with the phrase: "That's not the way! Jesus is the way." Finally, my friend looked up from her newspaper and said, "Pardon me, but I think you're giving Jesus a bad name." She went on to make the point that in her tradition (a mainline Protestant faith) God is conceived as loving and tolerant, not angry and hateful. This apparently struck a chord with the other passengers, who shouted out their support. The ranter sputtered and swore, then turned sullen. When the doors opened, he slunk off the train and the commuters returned to their papers.

LOVE THE SIN:
Sexual Regulation and the Limits of Religious Tolerance
by Janet R. Jakobsen and Ann Pellegrini
New York University, $21.95

Regardless of how you feel about religion, this should be an encouraging tale. For it supports the comforting idea that at the core of American religiosity, there beats a big and inclusive heart that has room for all. That's what it means to be a tolerant culture, right?

Not necessarily, according to Janet Jakobsen and Ann Pellegrini, the authors of *Love the Sin*. They argue that the American tradition of tolerance was formed and continues to struggle under the weight of what is essentially a straight, white, male, reformed-Protestant theocracy. Jakobsen and Pellegrini claim that Americans who defy the old Puritan norms—by being gay, for example—are only "tolerated" in a condescending, "how odd" sort of way. And even then, the authors observe that tolerance doesn't really extend to the activities, like having gay sex, which set the outsiders apart from the norm. *Slate*'s Dahlia Lithwick calls this tradition of loving the sinner and hating the sin "Will & Grace (gays are so cute, but don't show me what they do in bed)" homophobia after the characters on the popular TV show. Whether it's homophobia or some lower-order squeamishness is perhaps a judgment call, but Jakobsen and Pellegrindo do a nice job of showing how the love-the-sinner/hate-the-sin tradition falls dramatically short of the higher aspiration to tolerance.

But while the authors are generally very insightful when explaining what ails the current system, it's in prescribing how to fix it that the book falls down. Jakobsen and Pellegrini believe that the tradition of tolerance is so broken that it must be discarded entirely. Instead of tolerance, they "dream" of a radical two-part solution that would effectively knock all of those straight WASP males off their dominant-paradigm pedestals. In the world they envision, the state would no longer have any purchase to regulate sex. The authors would abolish marriage to accomplish this. As to the second part of their solution, the nation as a whole would be taught to "love the sin"—i.e., appreciate gay sex as an affirmative good—through the allocation of more "public space" to the "cultural forms" that gay sex produces. Neither of these is an especially compelling idea. After all, marriage is an institution that has given literally hundreds of millions of Americans dignity, stability, and meaning in their lives—so why should we want to do away with it? As for the suggestion that more public space needs to be given over to promoting the value of gay sex, it's kind of hard to see exactly how this would work. A newsletter? More and raunchier episodes of "Will & Grace"?

Nevertheless, even if their prescriptions are feeble, who can blame the authors for wanting to shake things up? Tolerance has, to a great extent, failed the gay community in the United States. Homosexuals do not receive equal treatment under the law—not even close. Federal anti-discrimination legislation applies to women and ethnic minorities but not to gays. Gays cannot serve openly in the military, cannot marry in the eyes of the law (although a handful of states now recognize same-sex civil unions) and, believe it or not, cannot legally have sex in some 13 states.

What's truly appalling is that the constitutionality of that last item—the right of states to regulate the most intimate affairs of their gay citizens—was upheld as recently as 1986 by the Supreme Court. In its infamous *Bowers v. Hardwick* decision, the court breezed past two decades of its own case law that had created the expectation of sexual privacy in the home, and allowed the state of Georgia to fine Michael Hardwick for having consensual sex with another man in his own bedroom. Why was this any of the state's business? Because, reasoned Justice Byron White for the 5-4 majority, the proscription against sodomy has "ancient roots."

Of course, by this reasoning it might still be legal to burn witches. We got past that ugly chapter in our moral history, and we'll get past this one, too. Changes are already afoot. This spring, the Supreme Court is considering the constitutionality of Texas' homosexual-conduct statute in *Lawrence v. Texas*. This will give the court an opportunity to undo the damage it did in *Bowers v. Hardwick*—either by tossing out the Texas statute on a new "equal protection" theory or by simply owning up to its mistake and reversing its earlier decision. Either result would be a fine victory. By finally protecting the right of homosexuals to engage in the activities that, in a very significant way, help make them who they are, the court would reinforce the spirit of tolerance displayed on that D train into Manhattan. And it would stand up for the proposition, too readily dismissed by Jakobsen and Pellegrini, that through tolerance Americans are indeed capable of meaningfully

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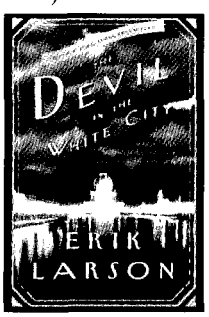
accepting both the sinner and the sin.

STEPHEN POMPER *is a lawyer who practices in Washington, D.C.*

Fair Play

By Brian Montopoli

IN THE LATE 19TH CENTURY, THE Eastern elite considered Chicago a cultural backwater, a "crude, upstart, pork-packing city," in the words of one New York editor, with a vulgar populace and a foul, rotting stench rising from the stockyards. Chicago had just eclipsed Philadelphia to become the nation's second-largest city, but its political and business leaders longed for respect and knew that a galvanizing event would force the snobs back east to take the city seriously. France had held its Exposition Universelle, a World's Fair showcasing the Eiffel Tower, in 1889, and the fair's implicit declaration of French cultural superiority had inflamed American sensibilities. Flush with Paris envy, Congress decided to hold a fair of its own, and it needed to find a host city: After a nasty fight with New York (during which another of New York's editors dubbed Chicago "the windy city" for its politicians' blustery boasts that they would ultimately prevail), Congress awarded the fair to Chicago. The question then became whether the fair would be Chicago's great triumph or, as author Erik Larson puts it, a "humiliation from which the city would not soon recover."



THE DEVIL IN THE WHITE CITY: Murder, Magic, and Madness at the Fair That Changed America
by Erik Larson
Crown Publishing, $25.95

So begins *The Devil in the White City*, Larson's sprawling account of the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, which has largely faded from the popular imagination despite its tremendous cultural, social, and architectural impact on turn-of-the-century America. For its time, the fair was impossibly grand, the biggest American event since the Civil War; it would introduce Cracker Jacks, Aunt Jemima's pancake mix ("slave in a box," as its makers dubbed it), the Ferris Wheel, and a whole host of other products, as well as popularizing the new miracle of alternating current. But the fair's greatest feat was convincing Americans that cities need not merely be filled with pragmatic structures in which form followed function; the fair's mere existence seemed to argue that the city could be beautiful. Though their work would later be derided by Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright as hobbling America's organic architectural movement, the fair's primary architects Daniel Burnham and John Root oversaw the creation of neoclassical buildings that awed visitors, some of whom broke down weeping when they caught sight of what came to be known as the White City.

This was also a period when it was becoming socially acceptable for young women to travel alone, and they were arriving in Chicago in droves. Waiting for them, as Larson tells us, was one Herman Mudgett, a.k.a. H.H. Holmes, a serial killer who preyed on his guests in a darkly lit hotel near the fairgrounds that boasted such odd features as inescapable vaults and a crematorium. Holmes gives the book added juice and some surprising metaphorical heft. His murderous rebuke to the uncertain young women who had ever so tentatively set out to push cultural boundaries, probably hobbled the country's evolving cultural mores as the 20th century dawned. Unfortunately, Holmes also brings out the worst impulses in the author. Larson is occasionally prone to lines that would seem overwrought in a Harlequin novel; in a work of nonfiction, they simply sound false. It is unlikely, for example, that "If [a] photographer saw anything in Mudgett's eyes, it was a pale blue emptiness that he knew, to his sorrow, no existing film could ever record." Later Larson describes those same eyes as possessing "a flat blue calm, like the lake on a still August morning."

But for the most part, the effort is a success, not least because Larson has done his homework: He conducted all of the research himself, from rare books and primary sources, and agonized over Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* for insights on how to recreate Holmes's killings. But Holmes's presence in the book is vital, not least because, for all its focus on the fair, this is largely a work about a forgotten Chicago, a city oddly regal in its sweat and stench. If the White City was the future, and Chicago, the black city, the past, then Holmes was at the intersection of two worlds: a man of charm and cold efficiency who took advantage of the new technology to serve impulses more at home in the stockyards than in Burnham and Root's utopian vision of the future.

BRIAN MONTOPOLI *is a Washington writer.*

Harley's Angels

By Jamie Malanowski

READING *Born To Be Wild: A History of the American Biker and Bikes* is like looking at a fan's scrapbook. It's full of photos and facts, and while there are interesting parts, the book is less than a history, and it's less than compelling, at least to a non-biker. If you're a biker, this may be just the sort of thing you'll wallow in for hours. (Although I suspect that if you're truly a biker, this is the sort of thing that will sit on a shelf while you go and ride your bike for hours.) In any event, if you like this paragraph—"New in '91 was the FXDB Dyna Glide Sturgis. For '92, there was also the FXDB Dyna Glide Daytona, a limited edition model, as well as the FXDB Dyna Glide Custom. For '93, H-D added the Dyna Wide Glide, FXDB Dyna Low Rider, and limited edition FLSTN Heritage Softail Nostalgia"—then this is the book for you. (By the way, the paragraph does go on, but if you want to find out what happened in '94, you're just going to have to buy a copy.)

There are some cool nuggets here, such as a three-page discussion about why Langlitz Leathers of Portland, Ore., makes the best motorcycle jackets. Langlitz has 15 workers, who custom-make six jackets a day; you have to be prepared to wait seven months for your order to be filled. "To make more," says owner Dave Hansen, "I'd have to hire more people, because none of us likes to work late or on weekends. Then I'd have to find a bigger building. And I like this building." But on the whole, the book is lacking.

Nevertheless, after reading this

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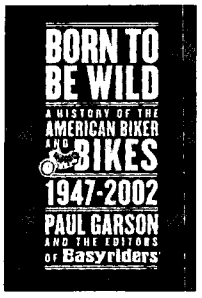
choppy, inelegant pastiche, you do come away with an insight into the nature of American rebelliousness. *Born to be Wild* spends some time, for instance, on the seminal event in Biker Culture, the moment when the image of the motorcyclist as an outlaw became permanently fixed in the public's mind. In 1947, there was a kind of permanent floating bikers' festival; enthusiasts looking for a reason to ride would all head for some little town—this one this week, another one next week—where they'd hang out and drink beer and have races and other contests. Over the July 4th weekend, the bikers descended on sleepy Hollister, Calif. There, the gentlemanly enthusiasts were joined by a more raffish element—the Booze Sinners, Satan's Sinners, Satan's Daughters, the Winoes. Apparently, they took over the town in such a loud and unruly way that Hollister's authorities called in the state police, who sent 500 peace officers.



BORN TO BE WILD:
A History of the American Biker and Bikes, 1947-2002
by Paul Garson & the editors of Easyriders
Simon & Schuster, $26.00

What perhaps felt like the sack of Troy in reality generated no more than 50 arrests for public drunkenness, indecent exposure, and resisting arrest. But when *Life* magazine ran a cover photo of a beer-blasted biker astride his Harley, the image was cemented—after the release of the Marlon Brando film *The Wild Ones*, loosely based on the Hollister events, it would never be challenged. A spokesman for the American Motorcycle Association, trying to calm the post-Hollister panic, said "only 1 percent" of motorcyclists "are hoodlums and troublemakers." Somehow, that was the key. A number of motorcyclists, many of whom were neither hoodlums nor troublemakers, began sporting a "1%" patch on their jackets. Motorcycling as a symbol of rebellion was born, and its finest cultural moments since then have reaffirmed that pose. In *Easy Rider*, for example, Peter Fonda and Dennis Hopper's anti-establishment attitudes were perfectly expressed by their motorcycles; it's impossible to think that the film could have worked if they were driving a Beetle. And in *The Great Escape*, Steve McQueen's motorcycle was the perfect vehicle for a character who simply refused to be confined in a prison camp.

But this is pretty much all motorcycling has come to mean. Think about this: There are all kinds of cars, enough so that far and wide, people are able to make statements about themselves with their vehicles. I'm a rugged Navigator man, I'm a family oriented minivan mom, I'm a sexy Camaro guy, I'm a brainy Volvo type. But even though people from all walks and stations of life like motorcycles—Malcolm Forbes, Jay Leno, Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Richard Myers—when they get on their bikes, they only make one statement: I'm a rebellious free spirit. (Okay, okay—when a police officer appears on his motorcycle, he's not saying he's a rebellious free spirit. Exception noted.) But apart from Ponch and John, nobody gets on a motorcycle and says, "I'm a member of the establishment." Even when the rider is obviously a member of the establishment, the motorcycle drapes him in subtext. When Forbes got on a bike, he was not the billionaire expressing his billionaireness; he was a billionaire expressing his motorcyclingness.

Motorcycling has become a bourgeois way for middle-class people to exhibit rebelliousness as a leisure-time lifestyle. A person may feel rebellious, dissatisfied with the confines of job and family and responsibility, but he's not going to be able to express that through gardening or golf or paragliding or stalking under-priced Hummel figurines at flea markets. But if he gets on a bike, he'll find millions of others, many just like him, willing to flatter that image of himself. Somehow this hobby and the companies that promote it have managed to monetize restlessness and rebellion. Between 1986, the first year Harley-Davidson issued stock, and 2001, its shares rose in value 15,000 percent. Other products associated with rebellion—marijuana, for example—remain illegal.

The frontier has long since closed, and the great empty West is rapidly subdividing. Motorcycling lets people pretend to be cowboys for a while. It's a harmless and maybe even a helpful hobby. But what does it mean that there are a few million people around who want to be rebellious and free and find this as the best outlet for those feelings? Maybe nothing. After reading *Born To Be Wild*, you have to believe that most of them are probably content to change their oil and go for a drive, imagining that under their safety helmets, their thinning, graying locks are blowing in the breeze.

JAMIE MALANOWSKI *is a New York writer.*

Tear Down This Wall

By Alan Greenblatt

THERE'S CERTAINLY A CASE TO be made against gated communities. Through physical exclusion, people who live within them make it more difficult for themselves to know, and therefore care about, fellow citizens who are socially, economically, or racially different.

This is the case that Setha Low, a cultural anthropologist at the City University of New York, attempts to make in *Behind the Gates*. She paints a picture of gated communities as separatist enclaves, with residents relying on gates and guards to wall them off from the contemporary world of crime and kidnapping. Low is largely convincing on these points, but what she fails to do is make it clear that the people who choose to live in gated communities are really any different from people who live in other affluent suburban developments.

Low conducted dozens of interviews for this book with residents of gated communities in and around San Antonio, Queens, and Nassau County, NY. Much of her book is given over to airing their concerns. Again and again, we hear from people who, although not necessarily touched by crime themselves, live in near-constant fear of it. They have bought into the marketing slogans of developers who promise "lemonade stands, not crime … on every corner."

The idea of living in physically protected environments that can stave off undesirable elements has long held appeal. In the 19th century, the rich began to sequester themselves in neigh-

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borhoods from Gramercy Park in New York to the Central West End in St. Louis. But it was only with the advent of retirement developments, such as Leisure World, in the 1960s that the middle class chose to wall itself in. By 2001, 6 percent of U.S. households—more than 7 million—were located behind gates, with another 4 million located along streets where access is controlled by keys, security codes, or guards. Today, one-third of all new developments in Southern California come equipped with gates, and the numbers, Low writes, are similar around Phoenix, the Washington suburbs, and parts of Florida.

Gated communities "preselect a ready-made community of socially and economically similar people," Low writes. But as her interviews reveal, in time that self-selection feeds upon itself and fear of outsiders grows. Low quotes a San Antonio woman identified as "Felicia" (identities are masked throughout) as saying "if you go downtown, which is much more mixed, where everybody goes, I feel much more threatened." Due to lack of exposure, Felicia's young daughter has grown afraid of poor people on the rare occasions she encounters any. Other residents are even more open about such issues. A teenager dressed in a tennis skirt for a Fourth of July party casually tells Low that the Mexicans downtown "are dangerous, packing knives and guns."

BEHIND THE GATES: Life, Security, and the Pursuit of Happiness in Fortress America
by Setha Low
Routledge, $26.00

Low blames gated communities for exacerbating these segregationist or even racist tendencies and spends a good deal of space promoting the idea that gates and guards are "symbols of exclusion," even though she doesn't believe that they are all that effective at keeping unwanted people out. Unfortunately, she is not wholly convincing on either point.

Low's interviews leave little room for doubt that those who live in gated communities do so because they want to get away from certain types of people, whether criminals or members of other classes or races. She gives a good background sketch of the ways that these communities are simply an outgrowth of centuries-old forms of social controls and class separation, describing postwar American suburbs as "enclave developments with districts segregated by race, class, and social status [where] exclusion is a fundamental organizing principle."

How, then, is a gated community any different than your average suburb? Granted, many suburbs, especially older towns closest to the central city, have undergone enormous demographic changes in recent years. Suburbs are much likelier to house African Americans, Latinos, and other recent immigrants today than they were 20 years ago. Yet there are still plenty of newer suburbs being built further out that are part of the old pattern of "white flight." Low does not deal with continuing patterns of housing segregation that were very much in evidence in the 2000 census. But in light of them, gated communities look less like an anomaly, and more like a symptom of that larger problem.

Low concludes that crime rates aren't any lower in gated communities than in nearby neighborhoods that don't have gates. But she offers strikingly little data to back up that assertion. It's odd that she doesn't cite any statistics comparing crime rates in the relatively few communities where she conducted her research with other demographically similar neighborhoods in the same zip codes.

Maybe statistics wouldn't be enough to convince residents they'd be living just as safely without the gates. After all, as Low points out, fear of crime did not diminish during the 1990s even as crime rates dropped. Those who have chosen to live in gated communities made that choice out of fear, not because of a cold, hard look at the numbers.

Low allows ample expression of those fears in *Behind the Gates*. They should sound familiar to anyone living in post-September 11 America, where the same impulse that drives people "behind the gates" now prevails throughout society: the timeless fear of outsiders, exacerbated by mistaking occasional but real threats as something pervasive and constant.

ALAN GREENBLATT *is a staff writer for* Governing.

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Diplomatic Immunity

By Jacob Heilbrunn

IN 1958, *The Ugly American* became a bestseller. It was written by William J. Lederer, a retired naval officer, and Eugene Burdick, a university professor. In it, the United States is losing the Cold War, not because of Soviet or Chinese treachery, but because of its own incompetence. The American representatives abroad are hicks from the South, who are ignorant of local languages and customs.

As Thomas Alan Schwartz notes in his excellent *Lyndon Johnson and Europe: In the Shadow of Vietnam*, Lyndon B. Johnson became the personification of the ugly American for many of his countrymen during Vietnam. Johnson was routinely portrayed as a fool, a provincial who was innocent of the complexities of international relations. The anecdotes are legion: In a remark that Yogi Berra might have appreciated, Johnson, returning from a trip to Asia, tells reporters, "Boys, I don't understand foreigners. They're different from us." Henry Kissinger observed, "President Johnson did not take naturally to foreign relations."

LYNDON JOHNSON AND EUROPE: In the Shadow of Vietnam
by Thomas Alan Schwartz
Harvard University Press, $29.95

Schwartz will have none of this. As historians are wont to do, he seeks to rehabilitate what has been condemned. He does not go so far as to describe Johnson as a diplomatic mastermind, but it seems safe to say that something more than grudging admiration suffuses his book. He depicts a Johnson who overcame his initial clumsiness and learned in office to protect and assert American interests in Europe: "Lyndon Johnson emerges ... as an astute and able practitioner of alliance politics, a leader who recognized how to assemble cross-national coalitions and work toward his overriding goals and objectives." In other words, he wanted to win.

What about Vietnam? Schwartz treats Vietnam only as the backdrop to Johnson's attempts to hold NATO together and reach a détente with the Soviet Union. Indeed, Schwartz reminds us—and it is an important reminder—that Johnson was less hidebound than the Germans in seeking to reach an accommodation with the Kremlin.

In Schwartz's telling, Vietnam is only part of the reason that Johnson has gotten such a bum rap. He detects a kind of reverse racism against Southerners. *Washington Post* cartoonist Herblock, he reminds us, showed Johnson as a white slave master whipping the White House staff. Contrasted with the urbane John F. Kennedy, Johnson was a vulgarian unfit for Georgetown salons. Schwartz is probably on the mark. A.J. Liebling observed that "Southern politicians travel badly, like sweet corn. By the time they reach the cities of the north they have become overripe, offending delicate Northern palates. That is what happened to Johnson." Some, not all, of the hostility to Bill Clinton probably also derived from the sense, at least among the Georgetown set, that he was a bumpkin who was soiling the city with his peculiar mores and cronies. Recall David Broder's comment that it wasn't Bill Clinton's town to trash. But whether a southern pedigree is entirely responsible for such snobbery is questionable. Richard Nixon was not exactly welcomed in Georgetown either, while Henry Kissinger was feted by the Washington elite.

Some of Schwartz's passages will be of interest only to financial historians. His accounts of dealings with the British and Germans over balance-of-payments matters are detailed, but not the stuff of high drama. It's probably the plight of financial historians that the real excitement belongs to the diplomatic types writing about the grand drama of negotiations on missile agreements and wars. Still, Schwartz deftly evokes the financial worries of Johnson's advisers. He might have made more of them. It seems clear that the United States was already headed for fiscal trouble before Vietnam had really heated up.

Schwartz is at his most interesting in detailing Johnson's approach to the Cold War. He compellingly shows that Johnson was prodding conservative Christian Democrat chancellor Kurt-Georg Kiesinger to ease up on the Cold War rhetoric and reach out to the East Germans. In light of later U.S. worries about the Social Democratic Ostpolitik, or détente, pursued by Willy Brandt these sections make for rather amusing reading.

Schwartz emphasizes that Johnson was something of a dove when it came to dealing with the Soviet Union. He put heart and soul into negotiating the 1968 non-proliferation agreement. He told Soviet premier Alexei Kosygin that he was under tremendous pressure from Congress to deploy a defensive missile system, but sought a "mutually acceptable and stable balance of forces, verifiable to the maximum extent possible by our national means." In Schwartz's view, Johnson set the stage for the Nixon administration pursuit of détente and arms control with the Soviet Union. In 1968, Johnson declared, "the old antagonisms which we call the 'Cold War' must fade—and I believe they will fade under stable, enlightened leadership."

Still, Schwartz can't completely evade the issue of Vietnam. The tack he takes is to argue that it was one strand of Johnson's foreign policy. At the same time, he bravely cites Michael Lind's contention that Vietnam was a "necessary war," in the context of the times is likely "much closer to the truth than the perception that the war was pointless or even immoral."

As the rehabilitation of Johnson continues, it's striking that George W. Bush, also depicted as a rube, has largely taken the opposite tack from Johnson. He's spurned the Atlantic Alliance as he pursues a small foreign war abroad. Bush has torn up the alliance and turned against the United Nations. Or has he? Books like Schwartz's that turn the conventional wisdom on its head offer a reminder that a gulf always ends up separating contemporary judgments from historical ones.

JACOB HEILBRUNN *is a member of the* Los Angeles Times *editorial board.*

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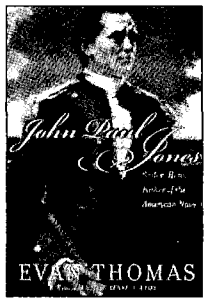
Navy Blues

By Michael C. Boyer

JOHN PAUL JONES ARRIVED IN the United States like many immigrants—under a false name and a charge of murder. Just 26 years old in the winter of 1774, Jones was already a slave trader, murderer, and sea captain. America was already home to revolutionaries like Thomas Jefferson and Patrick Henry. Over the next 20 years, Jones would carve his place in history among them, as the founding father of America's navy.

Such lives stir imaginations. Herman Melville fictionalized Jones in *Israel Potter*. President Franklin D. Roosevelt wrote a (reportedly awful) screenplay about Jones in mid-1920s. Hollywood made a major film about his life released in 1959. And numerous biographers have tackled his globetrotting escapades. The latest is Evan Thomas, who in previous books has shown a penchant for debunking important historical episodes. In *John Paul Jones: Sailor, Hero, Father of the American Navy*, Thomas strives to expose Jones as a man driven as much by personal glory as duty to country, and one whose legend is as much fiction as fact.



JOHN PAUL JONES: Sailor, Hero, Father of the American Navy
by Evan Thomas
Simon & Schuster, $28.00

The son of a Scottish gardener who lacked the social connections to land a commission in the Royal Navy, Jones went to sea at age 13 as a lowly laborer, and quickly excelled as a seaman. By 19, he was first mate on a slave ship that sailed the infamous "middle passage" between Africa and Caribbean. By 21, he'd had enough of the high seas and set sail for home from Jamaica aboard the Scottish brig *John*. During the trip, Jones unexpectedly became the ship's master when its captain and first mate died suddenly. Only he knew how to navigate. Upon his safe return, the ship's owners rewarded Jones with command of the merchant vessel.

Jones was a demanding and difficult captain whose next command led to a mutinous rebellion, the leader of which Jones stabbed to death. By his own account, the slaying was accidental. But Jones nevertheless fled to Fredericksburg, Va., shortly before the war for independence in April 1775. Thomas argues that Jones viewed the war not as a patriotic duty but an opportunity: "The prospect of war meant a great chance for Jones to advance in ways closed to him in his prior life." Indeed, the disorganized American navy offered great hope to Jones, who was experienced in naval gunnery, which the British merchant ships he'd sailed carried for protection. Late in the summer of 1775, he went to Philadelphia to seek a post with the fledgling American navy.

In June 1777, the Continental Congress ordered Jones to sail for France as captain of the *Ranger*. He quickly succumbed to Paris, which was, Thomas writes, "extravagant beyond all imagining, a jarring mix of refinement and elegance, bawdiness and filth." Jones became obsessed with regality, parading around Paris in dress uniform, taking audiences with Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, and courting French debutantes.

The turning point for Jones came on Sept. 23, 1779, when the ship he captained encountered a Royal Navy man-o-war. Jones attacked, even though he was outgunned. According to legend, cries of surrender were heard on Jones's ship three hours into the battle. The enemy captain called Jones to ask if he sought quarters, to which Jones purportedly replied, "I have not yet begun to fight." (Archival records Thomas uncovers show that Jones probably never uttered those famous words, though he certainly did not surrender.) An hour later, it was his counterpart who called for quarters. News of the victory spread from Paris to Philadelphia.

Jones returned to Philadelphia at the pinnacle of his power, expecting that in return for his heroics, Congress would designate him the Navy's first admiral. But Jones was denied flag rank, due mainly to the jealous complaints of more senior captains. As consolation, Jones was to be given the 74-gun ship *America*, still under construction—but it was instead presented to France as a gift. In desperation, Jones joined a fleet of French ships with the hope that mastering French naval tactics would make him uniquely prepared for a position as fleet admiral in America's post-war Navy.

It wasn't to be. When the war ended on April 7, 1783, Jones, just 37, returned to America and urged Congress to create a naval academy and build a fleet equal to those of Britain and France. The cash-strapped Congress wasn't interested. Jones spent the remainder of his life in fruitless pursuit of glory, even working for a time as a mercenary captain of a Russian fleet for Catherine the Great. He died alone in a Paris apartment in 1792.

Thomas paints Jones as a man of resourcefulness and strategic vision, though one driven primarily by the pursuit of personal glory. Jones probably would have been pleased with what Thomas portrays as an "over-mythologized" legacy. Though flawed, Jones embodied much of what it meant to be an American, leading presidents and admirals to praise him profusely for strategic farsightedness and prevailing over modest circumstances. In doing so, they helped create the mythical Jones we remember today. Few did more to build this legacy than Theodore Roosevelt, who in 1905, with the Naval Academy under construction, transported Jones's remains from a built-over Paris cemetery with a special naval escort and laid him to rest in 1913 in a crypt below the academy's chapel in Annapolis. For many years, midshipmen were required to memorize a letter supposedly written by Jones on the proper qualifications of a naval officer.

Just as Jones's diary shows that he probably never uttered his most famous phrase, it also appears that he never wrote the letter. Yet Thomas concludes that even a figure steeped more in myth than reality deserves his place in history. Jones, Thomas writes, "fought for a world in which men might advance by their merits and drive, and not be pegged by their birth or place." Nothing could be more American.

MICHAEL C. BOYER *is assistant editor at* Foreign Policy.

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Who's Who

By Susan Threadgill

In late March, **Richard Perle** resigned as chairman of the Defense Policy Board, a once-sleepy, bipartisan advisory group that, under Perle's tenure, became a hotbed of neoconservative hawks. Perle's resignation followed accusations by *New Yorker* reporter **Seymour Hersch** that he faced conflicts of interest between his work on the board (which is unpaid, but subject to government ethics rules) and his private business dealings—in particular reports that he had been retained by the bankrupt telecommunications firm Global Crossing, Ltd., to help smooth over government approval of their purchase of two Asian firms, a deal under scrutiny by Department of Defense officials. But as the Center for Public Integrity reported recently, Perle isn't the only member of the Defense Policy Board with potential conflicts of interest. Eight other members are board members, employees, or trustees of corporations that earn hundreds of millions of dollars a year off of Pentagon contracts: **Harold Brown, Ronald R. Fogleman, David Jeremiah, William Owens, James Schlesinger, Jack Sheehan, Chris Williams**, and former CIA director **R. James Woolsey**. Looks like a few more resignations are in order.

Some crusades never end. More than two years after **Bill Clinton** left office, an independent counsel is still investigating his former housing secretary, **Henry G. Cisneros.** In 1992, you may recall, Cisneros told FBI investigators conducting his background check that he had given a former mistress, **Linda Medlar**, about $2,500 a month. Later, Medlar released phone tapes in which Cisneros said he may have given her as much as $250,000 over four years. When grandstanding FBI director **Louis Freeh** found out about it, he ordered an investigation to determine whether Cisneros lied to his agents. In 1995, a three-judge panel, including notorious Clinton-hater **David Sentelle**, appointed lobbyist-cum-lawyer **David Barrett** as independent counsel—an odd choice, given that during the 1980s, Barrett was accused by House investigators of using his GOP connections to win housing contracts from the Reagan administration. But even though Clinton pardoned Cisneros before leaving office, Barrett continued to pursue his investigation, which has lasted nine years and cost taxpayers $19 million. Why? According to the *Los Angeles Times*, Barrett "believed that officials of the Internal Revenue Service, conspiring with Clinton appointees at the Justice Department, had withheld tax information that could have implicated Cisneros in other crimes." The panel has lost patience, however, and last March ordered Barrett to cease "all investigative and prosecutorial activities" and issue a final report. Finally.

Most political consultants think it's too late for Gen. **Wesley Clark** (Ret.), CNN analyst and former NATO Supreme Allied Commander, to pursue the Democratic presidential nomination. But Democrats frustrated with the likes of **Howard Dean, Dick Gephardt, John Kerry**, and the rest of the gang needn't abandon hope quite yet: an Internet effort is underway to persuade Clark to run at www.DraftWesleyClark.com. The grassroots site is the product of **John Hlinko** and **Dave Wallace**, two moderate Democrats fed up with **George W. Bush**'s foreign policy and looking for a "proven leader" who is "up to the challenge." With the war over and Clark's television duties winding down, a few on the other side of the aisle have begun to worry. House Majority Leader **Tom DeLay** (R-Texas) recently attacked what he called "blow-dried **Napoleons** that come on television and in some cases have their own agendas," adding that, "General Clark is one of them that is running for president."

It may be **Donald Rumsfeld**'s latest hobby, but drumming up a war with Syria may not be such a hot idea—at least judging from the diminishing returns of recent Bush-led wars in the Middle East. Shortly after the first Gulf War, President **George H.W. Bush** enjoyed approval ratings as high as 90 percent. Following the defeat of the Taliban in Afghanistan last November, **George W. Bush**'s ratings were in the mid-80s. But recent polls taken after **Saddam Hussein** was deposed have put Bush's approval rating at just 71 percent. That would indicate that a pre-election invasion of Syria could only yield numbers in the 60s. Someone warn **Karl Rove**!

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